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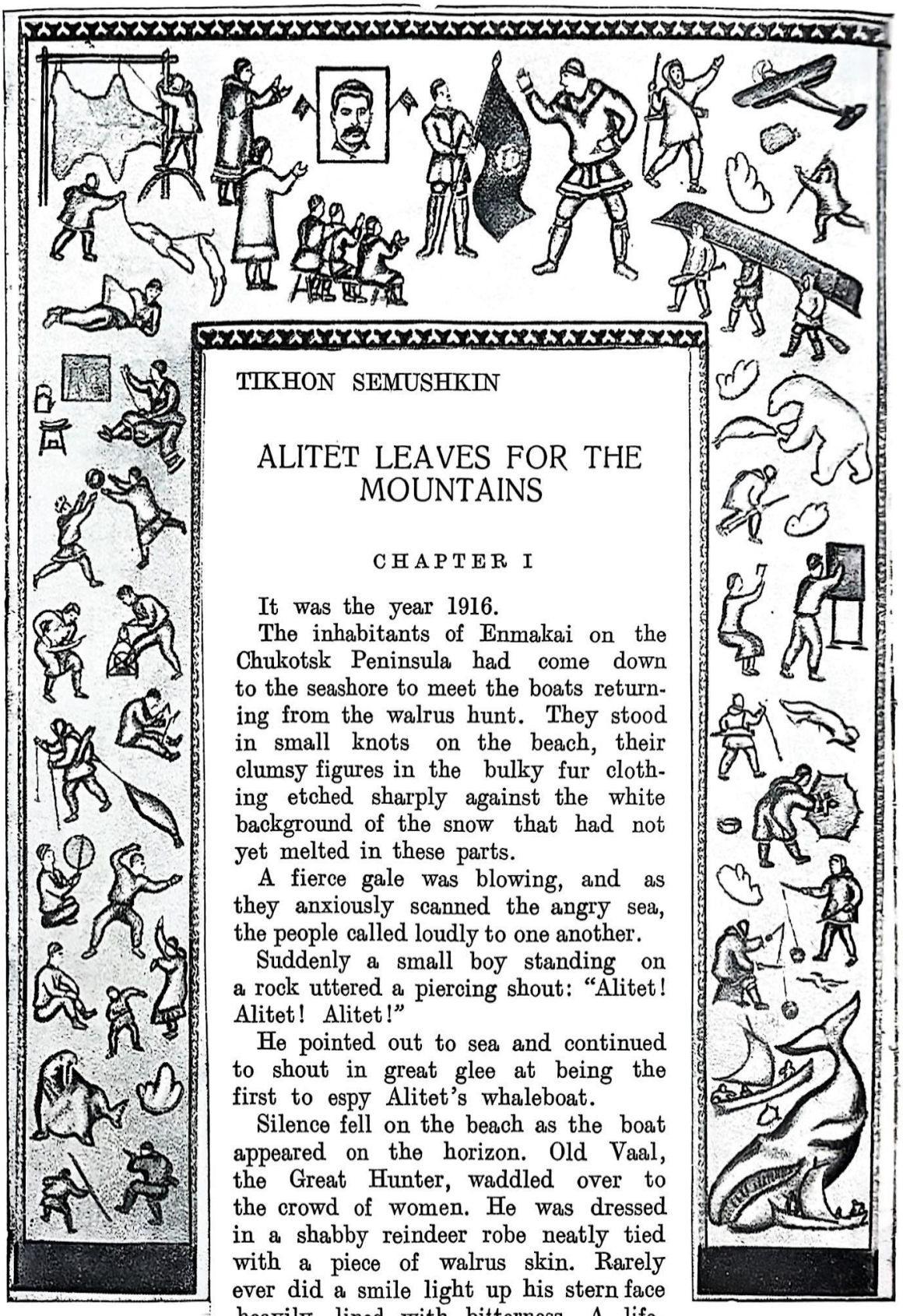


TIKHON SEMUSHKIN

ALITET LEAVES FOR THE MOUNTAINS

CHAPTER I

It was the year 1916.

The inhabitants of Enmakai on the Chukotsk Peninsula had come down to the seashore to meet the boats returning from the walrus hunt. They stood in small knots on the beach, their clumsy figures in the bulky fur clothing etched sharply against the white background of the snow that had not yet melted in these parts.

A fierce gale was blowing, and as they anxiously scanned the angry sea, the people called loudly to one another.

Suddenly a small boy standing on a rock uttered a piercing shout: "Alitet! Alitet! Alitet!"

He pointed out to sea and continued to shout in great glee at being the first to espy Alitet's whaleboat.

Silence fell on the beach as the boat appeared on the horizon. Old Vaal, the Great Hunter, waddled over to the crowd of women. He was dressed in a shabby reindeer robe neatly tied with a piece of walrus skin. Rarely ever did a smile light up his stern face heavily lined with bitterness. A lifetime association with the sea and many a hairbreadth escape from death had made the old man tough and wary. Old Vaal had the reputation of a skilled hunter and the people respected his word.

Gazing out at the stormy sea the old man said in a tone of authority:

"It is not dangerous to ride the waves in a whaleboat; it is made of wood and its keel is like this," he cupped his dried hands in the shape of a keel, "but in a flat-bottom boat of skin it is bad on a stormy sea. You may get sunk."

Although there was nothing new in what the old man said, the people moved closer and listened respectfully. Now and again one of the women would cast an anxious glance at the sea. They

all knew that in rough weather the hunters tied inflated walrus skins to their boats to keep them afloat. Yet alarm for their husbands was reflected in their faces.

The whaleboat came on at full speed, its keel cutting through the waves and its huge sail catching every gust of wind.

In the distance appeared the canoes, barely perceptible dots bobbing up and down on the waves.

When the whaleboat approached within a few yards of the shore the sail dropped, obscuring from view the carcases of the walruses that filled the craft.

On the prow stood Tumatuge, a sturdy hunter with a long leather towline in his hands. His feet set wide apart, his body taut, he skillfully balanced himself in the tossing sea. Each time a wave struck the boat a shower of spray sent the water streaming down Tumatuge's clothing. The hunters inside the boat watched the waves intently.

As the boat was swept onto the crest of a huge wave Tumatuge hurled the thong ashore. The end fell into the water and a receding wave carried it back.

For a long time the whaleboat rocked precariously on the waves, the men at the oars working furiously. Many times Tumatuge threw the leather thong but each time its end fell short of the beach.

Old Vaal, who had been sitting on shore puffing at a huge wooden pipe and watching the whaleboat, suddenly pulled off his torbazes [1], rolled up his trousers and, snatching from a youngster a coiled leather thong weighted at one end with a piece of wood, ran down to the water's edge. As a huge breaker receded he rushed after it with amazing agility, skillfully swung the strap and hurled it right around Tumatuge's neck. Then he turned and without looking back ran swiftly up the beach with the next wave close at his heels. As he threw himself down on the snow, panting with the exertion, the women rushed forward to help him on with his boots and the old man gravely stretched out first one foot and then the other.

"They have much strength, but little skill," was Vaal's comment on the young hunters.

The men on the beach began hauling in the towline from the whaleboat. The old man rose to his feet and closely studied the movement of the waves, while the men holding the towline fast watched him, waiting for his command.

In the whaleboat the hunters worked ceaselessly with their oars to prevent the craft from rising to the crest of a large wave before time.

The old man let several large waves pass, shouting to the men to take a firm hold on the line. Then he leapt up and shouted at the top of his voice:

"To-gok!"

The men threw their weight on the towline and running up the beach with wild whoops and shouts hauled the boat propelled by a huge incoming breaker. When the wave receded the boat stood clear on the snow-covered beach.

A short thickset man of middle age with a muscular neck jumped off the boat. His weatherbeaten face was almost brown. His black eyes, moving rapidly in their narrow slits, looked out from under an American celluloid eyeshade. True, the sun had long since hidden itself behind the clouds but Alitet had a weakness for American things and often used them without reason. His bare head was framed in a thick growth of bristly black hair as straight as whalebone. It covered his ears and nearly all of his forehead, and only the pate was clean shaven. His face and his whole sturdy figure bespoke physical strength, stubbornness and brutality. His sealskin robe was belted with a long seven-stranded wick instead of the usual strip of leather. From this belt hung a variety of amulets: pieces of leather, a red bead, a miniature walrus carved from bone and a twenty-five cent piece. The whaleboat too was bedecked with amulets and talismans and the date "1915" was painted on its side. The amulets were a protection against evil spirits, misfortune and disease and brought good luck. Alitet was in excellent humour, for luck had been with him on this walrus hunt.

"There are no walruses close by!" he said to the people who crowded around him. "The walrus swims far from the shore. W-a-ay over there!" and with a sweeping gesture he indicated the watery vistas.

He turned and shouted to the men who were busying themselves around the whaleboat.

[1] Fur boots.

"Hey there! Haul the boat farther away from the waves!"

The men, clustered thickly about the boat, dragged it over the hard snow. On the bloody carcases of three walruses that lay at the bottom of the boat, stood eleven walrus heads with huge curved tusks.

Tumatuge took hold of the tusks of the biggest head and straining every muscle lifted it over the side of the boat and threw it onto the ground. As head after head rolled onto the snow the space around the boat was soon dyed crimson. Tumatuge pulled out the last head and stood it on the snow alongside the other ten. With their whiskered muzzles and dilated eyes the heads looked strangely alive.

Alitet knew what his friend the "Americano" wanted! Tusks! The meat could be thrown into the sea. After all, the whaleboat couldn't carry so many walruses.

In the meantime the canoes approached the shore one by one, keeping close together. The women with the children on their shoulders stood at the water's edge chewing seaweed and silently watching the progress of the tiny craft.

Old Vaal went over to Alitet.

"Yes, the walruses are a long way off," Alitet was saying with a satisfied smile. "The canoe hunters did not get a single one. My whaleboat is sturdy and as swift as a deer. The walrus cannot escape me. It was not for nothing that I gave Charlie those six white bearskins and all the white foxskins. And how many walrus tusks did he get from me into the bargain!" Alitet gestured toward the sea and added: "To hunt walruses on canoes is like trying to catch foxes by running after them without a rifle."

Eyeing the walrus heads sadly, old Vaal said with a sigh: "How much good meat wasted! How much food gone! The meat from eight walruses thrown into the sea!"

"The Americano wouldn't sell me a bad whaleboat," Alitet went on, paying no heed to the old man. He walked over to where the three carcases lay on the snow.

All the settlement dogs were there sitting upright and alert in a semicircle, their intelligent eyes fixed on the meat as they licked their chops expectantly. Now and again their impatience was betrayed by a prolonged whine or a loud snapping of jaws. The less patient picked up bits of blood-soaked snow and devoured them hungrily.

The return of the hunters was as eagerly awaited by the dogs as by the people. There had been no meat for a long time. The dogs had not been fed since the sled routes had closed. Skinny and scraggy, with tufts of fur hanging from their sides, they ran about the settlement searching vainly for food and fighting viciously over the bones the women threw out. Some of them ran away to the tundra and led a semiwild existence hunting for marmots and field mice. Alitet's dogs alone were well fed. Alitet liked good dogs.

One dog, unable to endure the torment any longer, threw itself on the meat. But old Vaal beat him off with his stick.

"Down! Have patience! I am waiting for my meat too."

The animal leapt weakly aside, casting a reproachful look at the old man.

Through narrowed eyes Alitet examined the largest walrus head. He pulled the tusks out of the snow, turned the head around and measured the tusk with his palm.

"Fine tusk. A good twenty pounds in each." He used the English word "pound", and none of the other hunters understood what either a "pound" or any other measure was. Constant association with Charlie had taught Alitet exactly what a "pound" meant.

Charles Thompson had chosen Alitet as his agent and had taught him to weigh merchandise on English scales. Now Alitet used the word "pound" solely in order to impress the others with his knowledge and to show them that he, Alitet, was a man who knew many things. Narrowing his shifty eyes slily he said:

"Dogs cannot understand man's speech. Neither can our people understand the meaning of the word 'pound'. I alone know!" And he bared his strong white teeth in a triumphant laugh.

"No, Alitet," said old Vaal shaking his head. "You are mistaken. Dogs understand man's speech but they do not wish to speak with him. That is what I think."

Alitet glanced at him with hostility.

"What are you saying, old man? Have you left your senses behind in your yarang?" [1]

[1] Tupek, a nomad tent made of skins.

For a moment or two Vaal was silent. Then, blinking rapidly, he replied gravely:

"There's sense in every head, Alitet. Men, beasts and even tiny birds all have their own sense. If our people sold Red-Nose Charlie the tusks themselves instead of through you, they too would know what a pound means."

"Why do you call him Red-Nose? Don't you know he doesn't like it?"

"You can't call a white fox red, can you? He is what he is."

Whereupon the old man turned slowly and walked unhurriedly over to the women.

The canoes were close to the shore now.

Alitet looked after the old man, spat into the snow and went over to his hunters. They had already loaded the walrus heads on a sled, harnessed themselves to it in single file and were hauling it to Alitet's yarang.

Without waiting for the hungry people to come and ask him, Alitet called out:

"Let each man take a piece of meat to his yarang. The canoe hunters will not bring any meat. But everyone must eat and so it is for me to feed the people." Turning to old Vaal, he added: "And you say the hunters ought to sell their catch to the Americano themselves. Do I not help them? If they were to trade with him themselves the Americano would fool them. But me he cannot fool."

"Yes, the Americano is an old friend of yours," the old man admitted.

Shouldering large chunks of meat, the people joyfully carried them to their yarangs. Everyone was happy. And no wonder, this was meat from the first catch. The hunting season had just begun.

"Stop!" Alitet suddenly cried. "Wait! Drop the meat! We must help the canoes ashore."

The people obediently threw down the meat and ran to Alitet. He was their acknowledged leader, the master of the settlement, and the people were accustomed to obeying him without question. Alitet's strength and power were renowned along the entire coast. His fame had penetrated even into the interior of the tundra where the nomad reindeer herders lived.

The canoes with sails made of old sackcloth neared the shore. One of them was submerged in the water up to the gunwale. Six inflated seal bladders, like the huge clumsy paws of some legendary beast, flapped on the water, buoying up the canoe. The hunters in their fur robes sat waist deep in water and conscientiously plied their paddles, clinging fast to their seats and waiting patiently to be towed ashore. Four youngsters stood at the water's edge ready to pick up the towlines.

Old Vaal's son, Vaamcho, standing knee-deep in water threw the line three times but failed to reach the shore. The water gurgled hungrily under the slender bottom of the canoe. Old Vaal again started to pull off his boots. But at that moment Vaamcho stepped onto the gunwale of the boat and with a powerful swing threw the line ashore.

The old man waited for the exact moment, and again his "To-gok!" echoed over the shore.

As the canoe grounded and the dripping hunters leapt ashore, water streamed through a large hole in the bottom of the boat. The inflated bladders trailed limply alongside.

"The walrus skin is old," said Vaal with a sigh. "We should have changed it in the summer, but there were no skins."

Soon all the other canoes were beached. Alitet was right. The hunters had killed only two or three walruses between them. The walrus season had begun badly for the canoe hunters.

"If it were not for Alitet we would not have tasted any fresh meat," said Tumatuge.

CHAPTER II

Narginaut, a sturdy woman with tattoo markings all over her face, busily untied the wet thongs on her husband's fur boots. Alitet silently submitted to her ministrations.

Narginaut removed the fur boots and the fur stockings underneath. She pulled off the upper sealskin trousers that clung firmly to the limbs, and hung them up behind the ceiling beam.

Alitet, half naked, wearing light pyzhik [1] trousers with the fur on the inside, seated himself on a fluffy deerskin rug. His broad chest, muscular neck and sinewy arms indicated an unusually powerful physique. And indeed there was not another man on the entire coast who could down Alitet in a wrestling match.

[1] Young deerskin.

Alitet was fond of wrestling and if no volunteers were forthcoming he would force someone to accept his challenge. There were men on the coast who had been crippled by him in such wrestling bouts. And now, relaxing in his tent, he stroked his powerful muscles as though preparing for a bout.

Alitet's deerskin tent was roomy. Three primitive heaters burning walrus oil gave plenty of light and warmth. Over the heaters hung kettles and a cauldron of fresh walrus meat. From the wooden ceiling supports hung amulets: diverse sea animals, fish and human figures. One figure was so black with age that it was impossible to tell what it was—dog, fox, wolf or bear. The amulets protected the household from ill fortune.

On a wooden box in a place of honour stood a shiny nickel American alarm clock. Judging by the time it showed, the clock too served as a talisman, insuring good trade relations with the American.

Stark naked on a pile of skins close to the oil heaters sat a very old man with a flabby, wizened body. It was the shaman Korauge, Alitet's father. A pyzhik skin covered his knees. A long thin beard the colour of ashes lay on his hollow wrinkled chest. Korauge, the medicine man, was mending a drum, tying the dried walrus bladders to the hoop.

"Yesterday I beat the drum until my arms ached and the drum broke. But the spirits were placated," he said in a reedy old voice. "That is why so many walruses came your way."

"Father, you speak the truth. It is you who guided the walruses to my boat," replied Alitet.

Pleased by the admission, Korauge took a small whalebone stick and began scratching his back, grunting with satisfaction. Then he handed the stick to his grandson.

"Scratch, Goi-Goi," he said, "while I listen to Alitet."

The boy zealously applied himself to the old man's flabby back.

Alitet, stretched out on the fur rug, his hands behind his head, gave his father a detailed account of the hunting. When he finished Korauge remarked:

"You see how great is the power vested in me. The power of the spirits. I can command the beasts of the sea."

"Father, I shall tell the hunters of your power."

Narginaut placed a large wooden bowl of fresh walrus meat in the centre of the floor. Steam rose from the dish, and the savory odour whetted the appetite. They moved closer to the food. Narginaut barely managed to serve them. Quickly she cut up the tough meat and the whale blubber taken from last year's stock. Bending over the bowl, Narginaut cut thin slices of blubber and Alitet seized them as they fell from the knife and swallowed without chewing.

Now and again Narginaut took a small piece of fat and hastily threw it into her own mouth without pausing in her slicing.

Tumatuge crawled inside the tent. He quickly removed his fur robe, rolled it up and used it for a seat, applying himself to the food without waiting for an invitation.

The blubber had been an appetizer; the walrus meat was the main dish. It was fresh and delicious, this meat from the first killing. Holding the chunks of tough hard meat with their teeth, they sliced pieces off with a sharp knife held close to their lips, and swallowed the pieces avidly. For a while the only sound in the tent was the loud champing and the clatter of the knife against the wooden bowl.

When they had eaten their fill each one licked his greasy fingers and wiped his mouth with dried grass.

"Now give us some tea," Alitet said to his wife. "With sugar. Let Tumatuge drink tea as real men do. He shot well today. He killed nine of the eleven walruses."

Tumatuge smiled and wiped his perspiring face with his hand.

"We sailed far out into the sea," he said to Korauge. "For a whole day we worked with our oars, for there was no wind. But there were many walruses there."

"It was I who drew them thither with my drum," the medicine man interrupted him.

"You speak the truth, Korauge, there were many walruses there. The canoe hunters met but one. When they killed the walrus and loaded the meat onto their canoe the bottom gave way. We passed them at the time but we did not stop to help them."

"You could not help them. The wrath of the spirits might have been shifted to your boat. The spirits are all powerful, and simple men can no more oppose

them than the tundra grass can oppose the wolf. You did well," preached the medicine man.

"This time I shot better than usual," Tumatuge went on excitedly. "As soon as a walrus appeared the bullet from my rifle struck the exact spot at which I had aimed."

"And whose rifle was it?" Alitet intervened. "Was it not I who gave you that rifle? There is not another rifle like it along the whole coast. It is a Winchester, the very best. Charlie said so. I paid him eight white foxes, three foxes and twenty striped pyzhiks for it."

"There were ten pyzhiks, Alitet," Tumatuge timidly corrected him. "I put them onto the sled myself."

"No, twenty," Alitet insisted sternly.

"It's possible, Alitet," Tumatuge hastened to agree. "I am not good at counting. After all, I'm not a trader myself. How can I know?"

"I gave him twenty striped pyzhiks besides," Alitet repeated firmly. "Charlie told me this rifle is called 'savage' because it never misses."

The great copper tea kettle was empty by now. Korauge, the medicine man, who had listened attentively to the hunters, said:

"Oh, I am a great shaman. I take good care of my people. I am in great friendship with the spirits. The whole settlement lives under my protection. I heal the reindeer. I cure people. I drive out the evil spirits from our settlement. Vaal alone does not admit this. He is a wicked old man. Yet by guiding the walruses to our shore I do him a good turn also. For does Alitet not give meat to him as to the others?"

"True, true, Korauge! Every yarang needs three walruses for the winter. But could they kill three walruses on their miserable canoes? No. It is Alitet who helps them all," Tumatuge said.

"Yesterday when I beat my drum the spirits said to me: there will be walruses. I heard this as I hear the dogs whining at night. And I said to Alitet: prepare your boat, tell the men to get ready. And so you went. And you killed eleven walruses in one day."

His head resting on his knees, his mouth open, Tumatuge listened to Korauge in awe. Never had he believed so firmly in the miraculous powers of the shaman.

Narginaut went outside to clean the walrus skins. There was a thick layer of fat on them that had to be scraped off at once. The animals had been large judging by the skins. No doubt Alitet would wish to sell the latter to the reindeer herders.

Her innumerable household tasks exhausted Narginaut. Sometimes she wondered why they had to kill so many walruses. They did not need so much food. She did not understand why Alitet said that the more skins in the yarang the better. She only knew that her arms still ached from cleaning the last skin and now they had brought in more huge carcases. And no doubt there would be still more tomorrow.

"Work! Work!" Alitet would say. "Do the women in the other yarangs drink tea with sugar as you do? That is because you live in my yarang. I, Alitet, am as good as an Americano. Charlie himself said so."

CHAPTER III

It was night all the twenty-four hours. The moon had not yet been born. All was black. The sun did not appear at all at this time of the year. The people thought that the sun moved somewhere below the earth and the ocean. And it would be a long time before it returned.

Snowstorms raged. The yarangs creaked and trembled. The blizzard roared and groaned like a wounded beast maddened with pain.

The dogs, curled up, hid their noses under their bellies and seemed to pay no heed to the fury of the elements.

The fat supply had run out in old Vaal's yarang. Dry moss smoked in the heater and it was dark and cold inside the tent. The people huddled under shabby skins and chewed the remnants of raw frozen seal meat.

In one corner of the tent lay Chegyt, the favourite dog. Through half-open eyes Chegyt watched the people, his tail wagging faintly.

Old Vaal threw him a small piece. Chegyt sprang up and swallowed it greedily. He gazed at the old man with wide-open eyes waiting for another piece.

Vaamcho gnawing at a bone glanced at Chegyt out of the corner of his eye. He was sorry for the hungry dog. He took the bone out of his mouth, looked at it for a moment or two and threw it to Chegyt.

The dog caught it in the air and retired with it to a corner of the tent. A loud crunching followed.

Old Ilineut, Vaamcho's mother, removed the wooden bowl and sat down beside the dying lamp. It was nearly dark in the tent now. Ilineut lit her pipe. Supporting the stem of the large wooden pipe with one wrinkled hand, she gloomily blew out clouds of tobacco smoke, her dim eyes resting apathetically on the embers in the pipe bowl. When she had inhaled enough smoke to make her dizzy she handed the pipe to her son who lay stretched out on the deerskins. Vaamcho sat up on his haunches and puffed at the pipe.

Ilineut broke the silence.

"It is not good without fat," she said. After a pause she added:

"Go, Vaamcho, to Alitet. He gives to everyone. The blizzard will last for many days. And you cannot go hunting in a blizzard."

Vaal coughed and slowly began to clean the pipe. Silently he filled it with a mixture of tobacco and finely-ground wood.

"A wife," he said in a low voice without looking at his son, "is a source of unease. Go, Vaamcho. Give him a white fox. He is always generous when he sees a white foxskin. The fluffy fur tickles his nostrils. Maybe we will catch some more."

The old man sighed.

"True, the white foxskins ought to be saved to buy a rifle. A hunter without a good rifle is not a man. But what is one to do. Even a gun is of no use to a weak man. Without light and warmth a man is like a seal without air."

"The marrow dies in the bones without food," said Ilineut.

Old Vaal stretched himself, blew out a cloud of smoke, coughed and continued:

"For many winters I have said nothing. I held my tongue in check. Now my tongue itches to speak."

"Speak, father. Tell your son," said Vaamcho pulling on his fur boots.

"It happened a long time ago," the old man began. "That was an evil day when my eyes saw Alitet take white foxes from other men's traps. That was bad. Our people do not behave thus. My eyes smarted at the sight and my heart burned. Wild words tore at my throat but I said nothing. It was easier to say nothing than to speak," the old man went on almost in a whisper. "I hid behind a hill so that Alitet might not see me. I was ashamed that my eyes had seen this. And then Korauge deceived all the hunters in the settlements. The white and red foxes brought to the sacrifice came to be in Alitet's possession. I recognized my own foxes and the foxes of the other hunters when Alitet gave them to Charlie in payment for the whaleboat. The black nose of the white fox was cut in a way I alone cut them. That was my fox. I would have recognized it among any number of foxes in Red-Nose Charlie's warehouse. So our furs went to pay for the whaleboat. And now the whaleboat is Alitet's property. Yet again we must take him skins. That is what I had to tell you," said the old man shaking his head. "But never mind, Vaamcho. Go to Alitet just the same and ask him for some walrus fat and some of the meat he gives to his dogs."

Vaamcho tore off his boots.

"No, father," he said and his voice was unusually harsh. "I shall not go to him. My legs would not carry me. Better to dress and go out in the blizzard to the ice fields and wait for seals."

Vaamcho's dark eyes flashed with anger.

"Vaamcho," the old man said softly. "Seals do not come out in such a hurricane. Have you forgotten? Your young blood keeps you warm in any cold. But Ilineut freezes. Go, Vaamcho. Forget what I have told you about Alitet. We must not remember evil. And beware of Korauge, the shaman. You have a long time left to live. They do not like us as it is. It is not good to anger them too often."

Vaamcho pulled on his boots in sullen silence.

The old man inhaled some more smoke and went on:

"And the tangi [1] with their fire guns have scared the beasts. The rookeries are disappearing. Less and less seals swim ashore nowadays. Formerly the walruses slept peacefully on the beach. We used to walk over them and they did not wake up. We would spear only the old bulls. And now they kill them all. How much meat did Alitet throw into the sea during the summer? Red-Nose Charlie needs only tusks. But you cannot eat tusks," the old man took another long

[1] White people.

draw on his pipe. "There was a time when I could pierce a walrus straight through the heart!" And Vaal waved his pipe as though it were a spear.

The shadow of a smile flitted across his deeply-lined face and disappeared. Alitet had brought in more than sixty walruses during the summer. And how many of them had he thrown into the sea!

The blizzard raged with unabated fury. Seal hunting was out of the question. Many hunters called on Alitet these days and to each one Alitet gave a piece of meat and fat. He knew that it would not do to let the men die of hunger. They had to be fed.

Vaamcho too returned home with fat and meat.

Soaked in fat, the moss burned with a bright flame and lit up the dark, cold tent. Life came back to the yarang. How pleasant a warm and light dwelling is! Ilineut brightened up and began to busy herself with the cooking. Soon the water boiled and the old woman poured out hot tea for them all. But Vaamcho looked in gloomy displeasure at the oil heater that diffused the warmth.

"Why is there sadness in your eyes, Vaamcho? See how well the fire burns," said Ilineut.

"Alitet wanted me to give him Chegyt," said Vaamcho. "I said no. Am I not a hunter too? He was angry. I don't care. I learned something else on my visit to Alitet's yarang, father," Vaamcho added. He paused, then continued in great agitation:

"Remember, father, when I set the traps for the foxes at the Three Hills? That is a very good place. I hauled a lot of bait over there. But I didn't catch any foxes. When I went to look I saw the bait lay untouched. It had an evil smell. How came such a smell to the tundra? I did not know. But today when Narginaut gave me the fat and the meat she dropped a bottle. The bottle broke and the evil smelling water spilt. Here, father, smell—I dipped my hand in it."

Vaamcho put his hand to his father's nose and the old man recoiled in disgust.

"That is what the white men use for their lamps. Red-Nose Charlie pours it into his iron lamp. Is it possible that Alitet poured this foul fat over our bait?" the old man said shocked. "If so he is indeed a bad man."

"It is the same smell. I could not forget a smell as evil as that," said Vaamcho.

The old man sighed deeply.

The old woman was quite oblivious to this talk of her menfolk. She was busy with her household. There was a pail of slops to be emptied. But no sooner had she opened the outside door then a tremendous gust of wind tore the bucket from her hands and sent it rolling away from the tent. The old woman rushed out after it and vanished in the darkness.

Ilineut never returned to the yarang. The wind howled and tore at the roof. It lifted the whole expanse of snow from the ground and tossed it in the air and swept it out to the sea. A canoe that had been securely tied to the stake was torn from its mooring and carried away.

CHAPTER IV

Alitet lay on the soft reindeer skins digesting a solid breakfast. Goi-Goi sat astride his bare belly. The boy laughed gaily, glancing now and then at his mother who was pouring out some strong aromatic Lipton tea. It was stuffy inside the tent. In the light of the three oil heaters the dark, naked bodies of the occupants glistened like the hides of walruses.

Korauge, the medicine man, sat dozing on his skins. Fighting sleep in anticipation of tea he kept staring up and dozing off again.

"Charlie runs very swiftly, Charlie is the leader," Alitet said to his son. He was talking about his lead dog.

Alitet loved that dog and had named him after Mr. Thompson out of respect for his American friend.

"No one else has a dog like Charlie," he would say.

He raised himself on his elbows and puffed up his belly. Goi-Goi rolled off onto the skins and laughing gaily crawled back onto his father like a bear cub.

Tumatuge's wife stuck her head inside the tent.

Narginaut greeted her.

"Our fat has all gone," said the woman. "Tumatuge lies ill and it is cold in the yarang."

"Father, you must summon the healing spirits. We must help Tumatuge. He is our best hunter," said Alitet. But the medicine man was snoozing.

"Narginaut, give her a piece. Let her light her lamp and sew some fur boots and

slippers. When the second moon comes I shall go to the reindeer herders and to the Americano," said Alitet moving toward the cup of steaming tea. "But see that the shoes are good. The Americano himself will wear them."

The woman nodded and followed Narginaut out of the tent.

Korauge awoke and also moved over to the table.

"How many people I feed!" Alitet exclaimed.

"Many indeed," croaked the old man. He wiped his eyes with a deerskin and asked for some tea. "You are too generous, Alitet. You must husband your stocks. There is a shortage of meat on the coast and stocks are a great power."

A violent gust of wind shook Alitet's yarang. Everyone sprang up in alarm. In the corner an infant swathed in furs wailed.

"A very strong wind. I must ask the spirits to stop it," the shaman eyed his drum. "Let the people go out hunting. It is idleness that makes them greedy. They will eat all your supplies."

Narginaut entered.

"Don't give them much," Alitet ordered. "Let them ask more often. Charlie told me that it's better so. And don't give Vaamcho any more. Let him come to his senses. Even if he wanted to give me his dog now I wouldn't take it. Madman! What does he need one good dog for? It only suffers among the other wretched animals."

"You have forty-three dogs, Alitet. Why do you want Vaamcho's dog? He has so few," said Narginaut and was immediately horrified by her own temerity.

"What do my ears hear!" hissed the shaman. "Are you a team driver that you talk about dogs? Or perhaps your tongue has learned to speak of things that concern menfolk?"

"It takes much meat to feed dogs," Narginaut ventured meekly.

"Food is not for you to worry about. The meat is given away anyhow. Or perhaps you are weary of feeding my dogs, eh?" Alitet snarled. "Any woman would be happy to do your work. Father, do I speak wisely?"

"You are the son of Korauge. You cannot speak otherwise."

Gratified by the praise, Alitet smiled. He stroked the muscles of his arm contentedly. Suddenly an idea struck him and he turned to his father.

"And why should I not take another wife?"

"A man who cannot feed one wife, cannot take a second. You can feed many wives and all their children. After all, you are not a weakling. You feed four dog teams!" the shaman said proudly.

Alitet looked triumphantly at his wife:

"Eh? Narginaut? Do you hear?"

"As you say," she replied meekly.

"You have grown clumsy with age. You do not look after the household well."

For a long while Alitet and his father discoursed of many things. Alitet spoke of multiplying his wealth, of his plans to buy a large herd of deer, of trading with the deer herders and his business deals with the American.

Toward night, when all were preparing for sleep, the shaman took up the drum. Its hollow beat sent a rolling echo over the yarangs. Slowly the wind died down. The shaman chanted:

"My people have not left their yarangs for many days. . . .

"My people must go after seals. . . .

"Alitet is weary of helping them. . . .

"Cease, oh thou Wind!

"Korauge himself asks. . . ."

"Gyt, gyt! Kaiva, kaiva!" Alitet's cries mingled with the witch doctor's chant.

Korauge beat frenziedly on his drum and emitted hysterical yells to summon the spirits.

The north wind succumbed, and retreated to the hills, to the interior of the Chukotsk mountains, but the cracking of the ice was heard from the sea for a long time after.

The hunters emerged from their stuffy tents and gathered around Vaal's yarang.

"She went out with the bucket and . . . never returned," said the old man with a helpless gesture. "We searched for her in the night."

Old Ilineut was found in the morning among the pack ice at the very edge of the cliff. She was sitting hunched up against a chunk of ice, her head in her lap. Vaamcho touched her shoulders and the frozen body collapsed.

The rim of the bucket jutted out from under the snow a few paces away.

CHAPTER V

A fiery red moon emerged from behind the mountains. It rose quickly higher and higher in the sky. Now and again

darkness obscured the moon and then the stars shone more brightly than ever.

Silence. Silence broken only by the sound of a herd of deer passing over the tundra. They moved swiftly and the noise of their hooves drowned the cries of the herders. The herds passed to the west, to the Ryrkalyaeut tundra, and again a great silence reigned.

The moon rose high. In its light men hunted seals and foxes and visited neighbouring settlements. It shone on the yarangs of Enmakai where a crowd of young hunters were gathered around the largest yarang in the settlement—Alitet's. In spite of the cruel frost they were all bareheaded. The hoarfrost on their hair gleamed like silver. Their sallow faces were flushed. They had come to see off Alitet.

"Tumatu—uge," Alitet roared from within his tent.

"Coming!" responded Tumatuge and although he was ill he sprang up and ran to do Alitet's bidding.

If Alitet had commanded him to jump off a rock Tumatuge would have complied without hesitation.

"Harness Charlie in front and Kaper at the end!"

"E-gei!" replied Tumatuge and rushed to get the sled which lay on a trestle.

The younger lads ran forward to help him. It was a wonderful sled. It was made of Kolyma birchwood by the best craftsman, and was painted a dark green. There was not a single nail or bolt in the sled; everything was fastened by strong leather thongs. That is why it was kept on a trestle beyond the reach of the hungry dogs who might chew up the straps. Everything had its place in Alitet's household. Alitet loved order.

The sled stood ready outside the yarang. Tumatuge unrolled the long walrus hide traces to which the dogs were harnessed in pairs. Charlie, the leader, a large grey dog with a clever face and a strong wolf strain in him, ran over to the sled dragging Tumatuge after him. He was panting with eagerness to be off. Tumatuge holding him by the leash barely managed to keep up with him.

Charlie ran to the end of the traces and sat down on his haunches. His long red tongue lolled, and his eyes glistened with excitement. The dog knew his place. He whined with eagerness, gazing pleadingly at Tumatuge.

The rest of the dogs led by the other lads also strained at the leash. Well fed, they were longing for some exercise. Charlie lay down in the snow and rolled over on his back kicking his legs in the air. And as if by command all the other dogs followed suit.

Tumatuge ran into the tent.

"Alitet!" he cried. "The dogs are rolling in the snow. There will be a blizzard!"

"Never mind," Alitet growled. Slowly he finished his last mug of tea. As soon as he appeared the dogs leapt up, eager to be off. Charlie howled.

Alitet responded to the greetings of the lads, carefully inspected the traces and, scowling with displeasure, adjusted the harness on three of the dogs.

"Get me a belly-warmer," he shouted to his wife.

Narginaut ran to the yarang and brought back a small deerskin with straps at the ends.

"Charlie's fur is too thin on his sides. Might get frostbitten."

The dogs followed his every movement with their eyes.

Alitet turned his sled upside down and examined the runners.

"Not smooth enough. Need polishing."

Tumatuge's face betrayed the distress he felt at having been so careless. He rushed into the tent and reappeared a moment later with a kettle of water and a small piece of bearskin. Moistening the hide he commenced to rub the sled runners with much energy. A thin crust of ice formed on the runners.

Alitet glanced at it and said: "Too thick. It's got to be thinner, or it'll fall to pieces going over the humps."

Tumatuge pulled out his knife and rapidly scraped the ice off down to the wood.

Alitet took the strip of bear hide and passed quickly over the length of the sled, sliding the hide over the runners as he went.

"That's how it's done."

Tumatuge poured the rest of the water into a bottle and handed it to Alitet, who placed it inside his coat and sat down on the sled. The dogs pricked up their ears.

"Egei!" cried Alitet and the team tugging at the sled went tearing down the hill.

The lads watched with envy as Alitet rapidly disappeared from view.

It was indeed a thrilling spectacle well worth the risk of a frostbitten ear.

There was no better team on the whole coast. Alitet bought his dogs from Kolyma drivers and paid eight or more white foxes for each animal. Alitet alone could afford such dogs. He traded with the nomads. Every winter he brought them supplies of walrus skin, straps and boots, of which the herdsmen needed so many, and goods from Mr. Thompson's store. And every winter he came back from the tundra with a great quantity of foxskins.

Whenever some other hunter bred a good dog it invariably became Alitet's property. Indeed you couldn't keep a good dog from him. He would take it by force, if necessary. Alitet loved sturdy powerful animals that could run well. His dogs were all of the same size so that they should fit easily into each other's tracks. With dogs like these he could brave any storm.

With uplifted muzzles the dogs sniffed the air and sped merrily along. Alitet was in an excellent humour, as he always was when on his way to do business with Charlie.

CHAPTER VI

The settlement of Loren huddled on the rockbound coast at the foot of the mountain. The yarangs clustered haphazardly along the coast. Some were large dome-shaped dwellings covered with canvas, others were small huts roofed with walrus skins. At the very edge of the settlement stood cone-shaped yarangs covered with old sacking, old walrus skin and bits of sealskin. In these patched yarangs lived the hunters, who never ate enough to feel that faint weariness and pleasant langour that makes one sleepy.

There were never enough good furs. After each walrus hunt the hunters handed over the skins they had bagged to the owner of the canoes. Part of the skins went for food. "In winter no clothing will warm a man if he has no walrus meat in his belly."

Beyond the cliff began the flat beach covered with pebbles and snow. Here, close to the seashore standing slightly aloof from the yarangs stood a structure somewhat unusual for these parts. The roof and walls were of corrugated iron sheeting.

More than a dozen dog sleds were tethered around the hut. The dogs lay stretched out, relaxing after their long journey. The hunters gathered around their sleds exchanging the latest items of gossip. The centre of attention today was a young lad named Aye from Yanrakenot. In his sealskin pouch lay the skin of a rare animal—a silver fox. But although everyone knew that to bag a silver fox boded ill luck for the hunter, Aye looked surprisingly cheerful. The other hunters put it down to his youth and hence his ignorance of such things as omens.

But Aye knew all the omens. Deliberately he did not mention the second silver foxskin, which also lay in his bag. Two silver foxes caught at the same time bring you luck, and so Aye was happy. He felt that it was sometimes wise to play the simpleton before trading. It was funny to see how the others pitied you.

The hunters were looking forward to good trading. Charlie would be so pleased by the sight of the rare animal that his red nose would twitch. In order to put Mr. Thompson in a good humour Aye must open the trading.

A tall dark-eyed young man with the beginnings of a moustache on his upper lip, Aye wore an air of importance beyond his years. After all it wasn't everybody who could bring Red-Nose Charlie a silver fox! Aye even took a prominent place at the table when Charlie invited the hunters to have a cup of tea on the porch of his house.

The hunters were accustomed to Mr. Thompson's iron house. It had stood there for more than 20 years. The hospitable American never refused anyone a cup of strong tea with soda crackers. He even treated the hunters who would drop in at the trading station out of sheer curiosity. Mr. Thompson was a good businessman. Hunters would often travel for hundreds of kilometres to take a cup of tea in this iron house and examine the goods its owner had on display.

Charlie, as Mr. Thompson told the natives to call him, had lived here for more than twenty years. A curious fate had brought him to this strange remote land. When still a young man he had killed his wife and had fled from his native Norway to America to escape the hand of justice. Roaming from country to country he had finally made his way

to Alaska where he assumed the name of Charles Thompson.

Alaska gold turned his head as it had turned the heads of so many others but wherever he happened to be, Charles Thompson was always haunted by the thought that sooner or later he would be found out, for America extradited criminals.

Fleeing from the laws of white men Charles Thompson crossed the Bering Strait to the Chukotsk Peninsula then but little known to the rest of the world. Rumour had it that there was gold here, as much gold indeed as in Alaska.

When Charles Thompson first set foot on Chukotsk Peninsula a pickaxe and a few pocket instruments used by the gold prospectors were his sole possessions. Charles Thompson knew very well that gold would give him the power to fight any laws.

He had not been in Loren for long, however, when he made an extremely important discovery, one which fundamentally changed his plans.

He heard a great deal about Chukotsk gold from people he had met in Alaska, but no one had ever mentioned the wealth of furs to be had there. He soon realized that there were several ways of finding gold on Chukotka.

To pan gold alone in the cold tundra wilderness was hard. The life of the lone gold prospector was fraught with constant risk. Tomorrow you might either be a millionaire or die of hunger like a solitary beast.

And when Charles Thompson saw with his own eyes how gold in the form of priceless furs poured into the hands of the smugglers, a great light dawned upon him. There was no doubt about it, this was real business!

And so when the smugglers suggested that he be their agent,he readily consented. Without a single cent, on the basis of a simple gentlemen's agreement, he received a consignment of cheap wares for the natives. Before long Mr. Thompson took himself a native wife and settled down to the life of a trader in the settlement of Loren.

The following summer the smugglers' schooner failed to appear. Rumour had it that it had struck a reef, consigning the gentlemen with whom Mr. Thompson had transacted business to a watery grave.

With this piece of good fortune Mr. Thompson became the owner of a personal account in a Washington bank. His first substantial deposit for a fur sale was an event that loomed large in his life.

Much time had passed since then and the pickaxe with which he had arrived on Chukotka now lay on a shelf in his shop like a talisman that had brought Mr. Thompson to such a blessed land.

By now Charles Thompson was a rich man. He no longer had dealings with smugglers. Instead he was connected with a large and respectable firm.

Every summer a schooner came from America loaded with goods. For several days in succession the hunters worked from dawn till dusk hauling the stuff from the boat to the shore. And no matter how long the cargo stood unguarded on shore, not a single brick of tea, not a single piece of sugar or plug of tobacco would ever be missing. The people who dwelt on these shores were renowned for their scrupulous honesty. Notwithstanding their dire poverty the idea of robbing Charlie would never occur to anyone. And when the goods were moved from the shore into the warehouse this was done not to put them under lock and key but merely to protect them from the rain and snow.

Every summer the captain of the schooner handed Mr. Thompson a statement of his bank account showing that some ten to fifteen thousand dollars had been deposited for the furs sold the previous year. And in the long winter nights while the blizzard howled outside, Mr. Thompson would take out his bank book and examine the figures with tremendous satisfaction.

When he had gazed his fill he would put it back in the strong box along with his other treasures. He had enough money to live comfortably for the rest of his life on the interest alone. Twenty years ago he had not dreamed of possessing such a bank account. Mr. Thompson often thought of leaving this country. But he had grown accustomed to living here, and the desire to add another ten thousand dollars to his possessions induced him to postpone his departure from year to year.

"Why indeed should I leave this place?" reflected Mr. Thompson. "In this country, as a representative of the civilized world, I am a personage, a sort of

colonial governor. Why should I go to America or to Norway and be lost in the torrent of millions of not particularly happy people. No, I'll stay for another year at least."

CHAPTER VII

Mr. Thompson's shop was primitive, as primitive as everything else on this coast. The walls were of corrugated iron, the shelves were made of rough lumber used to truss up cargoes in ship's holds. The same rough boards placed on two large barrels served for a counter.

Mr. Thompson was a practical man. He did not believe in throwing his dollars to the wind. Sooner or later he would have to give it all up. This trade in a strange land was something temporary.

On the shelves lay tobacco, calico, beads, cartridges, hair combs, thimbles and needles. On the wall hung three Winchester rifles of different calibres: 25 by 20, 30 by 30 and 44. These were samples of the three types of rifles most widely used among the local hunters.

Mr. Thompson himself sat behind the counter. He was a thickset man of about fifty-five with a square jaw and heavy jowls and pouches beneath his eyes. A huge bulbous nose of a ruddy hue stood out startlingly on his clean shaven pallid face. Outwardly Mr. Thompson was good-natured. His powerful figure was full of dignity. Fur trousers and a thick flannel shirt of a checked design worn beneath his unbuttoned fur windbreaker added to his girth.

Mr. Thompson surveyed the crowd of Chukchi on the other side of the counter with a pleasant smile.

"Very good!" he said. "We'll do good business today."

The hunters nudged Aye forward. They were all very much concerned about Mr. Thompson's humour. How would Red-Nose Charlie behave today?

Aye, the hunter, proudly laid his silver fox on the counter.

Mr. Thompson got up quickly and snatched up the skin. The hunters brightened.

Through the horn rims of his glasses Mr. Thompson carefully examined the skin. He stretched it out full length and blew on it. A soft silvery wave rippled over the skin from tail to ears. Mr. Thompson gazed at the skin with unconcealed admiration, blowing loudly on the wavy fur. His eyes actually shone. The fox was a first-class specimen.

The hunters watched with bated breath. They had been wise to let Aye go first. A skin like that was lovely enough to soften anyone's heart.

Aye, feeling himself a great hunter, assumed an air of complete indifference. Inwardly he glowed, for this was a great day for him too. It was the first time in his life that he had bagged such a fox.

The hunters waited with the greatest eagerness to hear what Red-Nose Charlie would say. An eager curiosity stirred within them. Many of them had never caught an animal like that. The silver fox had indeed become a matter of pride to all the hunters present.

What would Red-Nose Charlie give for it?

With studied carelessness, Mr. Thompson threw the fox onto the pile of furs behind the counter.

"A good fox," he said.

Unwilling to bother the hunters with gratuitous comments and knowing down to the smallest item what each household needed, Mr. Thompson with slow deliberation laid out a number of articles on the counter: an enamelled tea kettle, a knife for cutting leather, a dozen plugs of tobacco, five bricks of tea, four yards of calico.

The hunters, nudging one another, moved closer to the counter to gaze upon this wealth. But the most surprising was the silent indifference of Aye. Even Mr. Thompson was amazed. "He's not satisfied. But what more is needed in the home of this savage?" Charlie wondered, reaching out for some beads, a file, some needles, a thimble and a comb.

By Mr. Thompson's beaming face it was obvious that he himself was amazed at his own generosity.

"Ten articles for one animal, and half of them iron!" he exclaimed.

"Ai, that is much!" came the murmur on all sides.

And indeed Charlie was being unusually liberal today. True, the animal was a fine one but no one expected such an abundance of goods in exchange. They all knew quite well that when Charlie was in a bad humour he was liable to forget the needs of the hunters. At such times the hunters would resort to cunning. They would deceive Charlie by concealing from

him that they had more skins in their bags. And they would carry them back for at least a hundred kilometres and wait for some occasion when Charlie would be in better spirits.

But Mr. Thompson was not deceived. Nor was he particularly worried. What did it matter whether he took the furs a little later? The important thing was to get them before the schooner arrived.

Today the hunters were determined to do business. Charlie was in excellent spirits. And so they crowded around the counter, each awaiting his turn.

It was then that Aye threw his bombshell. He stood silently beside the heap of articles Charlie had placed before him and instead of putting them away gratefully in his bag he slowly filled his pipe with tobacco mixed with powdered wood. Then, puffing out a cloud of smoke, he said:

"Charlie, I do not need any of these things you have here."

The hunters gasped.

"What! You mean to say you'd rather smoke that rubbish you've in your pipe than real American tobacco!"

"I don't want it. I want a rifle."

"Goddam! You haven't enough skins to pay for a rifle. You'll have to add at least one white fox if you want a rifle." Mr. Thompson was indignant.

"I'll bring you the white fox another time."

"Nothing doing. I have only a few Winchesters left. I've promised them all to Alitet. He's taking them to the mountains for the deer herders."

"That is a pity," said Aye calmly. "Give me back my fox."

Aye's answer left Mr. Thompson speechless. He took off his fur cap revealing several bald patches on his red head, ran his red handkerchief over his brow, removed his glasses and wiped them before he spoke.

"Have you ever seen such a hunter? Where has he learned to trade like this? Who has been putting you up to it, Aye?"

Aye did not answer. He stood uneasily shifting his weight from one foot to another.

"Well?" urged Charlie.

"Charlie," Aye began. "You know our old man Kamenvat? His daughter Tygrena is my promised wife. That is why I always ask the old man's advice in everything. It was he who told me where silver foxes could be trapped. I went there and for six days I lived in the snow watching my trap. And while I was away a Russian traveller stayed overnight in our settlement. Partisan they called him."

Mr. Thompson pricked up his ears. He had read in the papers about the Russian revolution. He had heard that there had been frequent changes in government on Kamchatka—Kolchak one day and Kapelev the next—and he knew that Soviet partisans were operating in the Kamchatka mountains. The advent of a partisan on the Chukotsk Peninsula was an unpleasant surprise for him.

"This Partisan (Aye thought that this must be the Russian's name) sat up all night talking to our old man. Tygrena listened too and she told me that the Russian had spoken about a new trade law. And when I left for Loren she said to me: 'Aye, try to trade with Charlie the way Partisan taught us. Choose yourself what you want for your fox. Ask for a rifle!' That is how it was, Charlie. . . ."

"Ha! Ha!" sneered Mr. Thompson, "Since when do hunters allow women to trade for them. Shame! There's a hunter for you!"

"Tygrena is a good hunter herself. She knows how to use a rifle and shoots straight," replied Aye.

"Very well," said Mr. Thompson. "Take your fox. Let it rot in your yarang and get nothing for it."

But as Charlie bent down to pick up the fox, Aye said:

"It will not rot. I shall take it to Pete."

"Pete Bryukhanov?"

Mr. Thompson was sore now.

"You crazy fool! You've lost your mind!" he shouted holding on to the skin. "Don't you know, dumbell, that Mr. Pete lives a good five hundred miles away?"

"It does not matter. I do not mind spending 20 days on the journey."

"Well, out of pity for your poor dogs I'll let you have the rifle."

And Mr. Thompson picked a 25-20 calibre Winchester off the wall and handed it to Aye.

"The rifle is good," said Aye, "but it cannot kill anything bigger than a seal. You know yourself that you need a 30-calibre rifle to kill a walrus."

Mr. Thompson swore angrily under his breath but fearing that the lad might

indeed take the fox to the Russian merchant, he gave him the rifle he asked for.

Aye, calmly laid the rifle beside his bag and pulled out a second silver fox even more splendid than the first.

"Kakomei!" breathed the hunters in astonishment.

"Well, you turned out to be quite a hunter, Aye!" Charlie reluctantly admitted. "You must be a good friend of the spirits if they allow you to catch such fine animals."

"Perhaps," replied Aye. "I always try to please the spirits."

Mr. Thompson examined the skin.

"What do you want for this one?" he asked for the first time in twenty years.

The hunters stared in astonishment at the American. They could scarcely believe their ears. Red-Nose Charlie had asked Aye what he wanted! That could portend either good or evil. It was difficult to foretell which.

"There are two of us without rifles," said Aye. "We have never had good rifles. Give me another one. Give me a rifle for Tygrena."

"You goddam son of a bitch!" cried Charlie. "Are you crazy? Why, you haven't paid in full for the first rifle. How can you ask for another. Do you want to incur the wrath of the spirits?"

The hunters pricked up their ears. Aye was indeed behaving badly. He seemed to be deliberately trying to spoil Red-Nose Charlie's humour and the trading had not properly started yet. It was clear to everyone that Charlie's good spirits had deserted him completely. At that point a small boy rushed into the store shouting, "Alitet! Alitet!"

The door burst open and Alitet entered dressed in a splendid fur robe of new deerskin.

"Hallo, Alitet!" cried Mr. Thompson relieved at the diversion.

Alitet elbowed his way to the counter through the crowd of hunters and stretched out his hand awkwardly to Mr. Thompson. Meeting Aye's eye he asked mockingly:

"What are you doing here? Come to see how the hunters trade?"

"Oh, he is a great hunter himself," said Charlie. "Look at this silver fox I have bought from him. But that isn't all. He has another one."

Alitet's eyes glittered with envy.

"How is it no one knew that you bagged these foxes?" he demanded.

"Everyone knows now," replied Aye quietly. "You too may look at them."

"Where did you trap them?"

"In the tundra."

"The tundra is as vast as the sea."

Aye said nothing. He remembered what Vaamcho had told him about Alitet pouring kerosene over his bait and he was reluctant to speak with Alitet about hunting.

"You are silent? Perhaps you stole them from someone else's trap?" Alitet pressed.

Aye flushed. The blood rushed to his face. What would the others think of him? It was hard to endure such an insult in silence. Aye wanted to tell what he knew about Alitet but Vaamcho had begged him not to say anything. Suppressing his anger, Aye said:

"I caught these foxes at the Three Hills, Alitet. You know the place. Vaamcho set his bait there too. But I poured the white man's lamp fat over mine. True, the white foxes run away from the stench, but silver foxes seem to like it. I did not know that myself!"

Aye glanced mockingly at Alitet waiting for him to reply. But Alitet turned away quickly.

"To talk nonsense is the same as to eat snow," he said. "It does not quench the thirst."

"Would you like some tea after your journey, Alitet?" asked Charlie.

"I would indeed."

"All right. We'll shut up shop for a while. I'd like to eat a bite myself."

Alitet and Mr. Thompson were great friends. Mr. Thompson considered Alitet a savage but he did not deny that he had some sense. For a Chukchi Alitet was quite a businessman.

With dog-like instinct Alitet sensed Charlie's attitude toward him. Indeed Alitet often compared himself to the lead dog in a team. The lead dog is always cleverer than the others and is worth five times as much. Feeling his superiority over all the other hunters Alitet behaved with Charlie as with an equal.

Charlie always shook hands with him, when they met, an honour he accorded none of the other hunters.

Mr. Thompson glanced once more at the silver fox and threw it onto the pile of furs behind the counter.

"There is plenty of time for trading. I'm going to close up now. You'll get your goods later on," he said to Aye.

"Perhaps you will take the fox later on then?" Aye asked timidly.

"Goddam it!" Mr. Thompson flared up. "This lad has the brains of a seal. He is afraid that his fox will not be paid for. Charlie has never owed any man anything. On the contrary, nearly all of you are in debt to me."

"True, true, Charlie!" cried the hunters. "We are all in your debt."

The hunters did not understand the meaning of "goddam" but they knew it usually went bad with the trading when Charlie uttered it.

Charlie bent down, picked up the fox and threw it in Aye's face. No one was sorry for Aye. Everyone felt that he deserved it.

"Take it back, take it back," one of the hunters cried. "Aye will wait."

Aye held the skin in one hand and with the other he wiped his perspiring brow. He was ashamed that his behaviour had caused the displeasure of his own kind.

Alitet snatched the skin from him and threw it behind the counter.

"Merkichkin!" he cursed in Chukchi.

"All right," Aye said, "Let it remain with you."

"As you wish," Mr. Thompson's tone was gentle now, "Charlie knows you all well. I have always tried to do my best for you."

The store rapidly emptied out.

CHAPTER VIII

Alitet returned home with a full sled of goods. He was well pleased with his trading, and had promised Charlie to collect a large quantity of furs from the reindeer breeders. They lived far away in the mountains and never came down to the coast. But before setting out on the long trek to the mountains Alitet decided to take himself a second wife. The girl he wanted had been betrothed to Aye from childhood. Alitet knew that, but the incident at the trading station had strengthened his resolve to take her away from Aye.

The day after his return from Loren Alitet set out for Yanrakenot. In his sled lay a deerskin, the traditional marriage offering. Of course, old Kamenvat would not refuse to take it and would gladly give Tygrena to Alitet. And if he should refuse, Alitet would take her by force.

The weather was calm and fine. A full moon shone brightly in the sky. Alitet drove his team swiftly. When he reached the Irgonei plateau Alitet halted the team. He looked out over the sea to where the ice fields stretched away into the distance. Beyond them was the black strip of the open sea with the sky gleaming blackly above it.

On the other side, over where the mountains reared, the heavens were sown with bright stars. Now and again a star dropped, cutting a silvery path through the sky. Alitet stuck the brake pole deeper into the snow, pulled out his pipe and tobacco, and lit up. After smoking peacefully for a while he got up and walked over to the lead dog.

Charlie wagged his tail, and stood up on his hind legs importuning his master to pet him. When Alitet came closer Charlie leapt up and placed his powerful forepaws on his master's chest, licking his cheeks and pushing his muzzle into the warm folds of Alitet's fur robe. Alitet loved Charlie. He took the dog's muzzle into his hands and rubbed noses with him.

"Run faster, Charlie boy!" he murmured. "Tygrena awaits us in Yanrakenot. The strongest, handsomest girl on the coast—Kamenvat's daughter. Old beggar Kamenvat. Once she is in my yarang I shall order her to choose the best morsels of walrus meat for you."

Alitet patted the head of the clever animal who whined faintly with joy as if it understood the man's words.

Alitet went over to another dog.

"And you, Wolf Back, what's wrong with that paw of yours? Hurt? Let's see it."

The large black dog with quick, expressive eyes rolled over onto its side and stretched out its paw. Blood seeped from a cut.

Alitet took a fur stocking and tied it onto the injured paw. Then he went over to Kaper.

The huge old dog sat at the end of the traces next to the sled. And although he did not display much joy at the approach of his master, his eyes lit up shyly and his tail stirred. Alitet did not like this dog and had wanted to get rid of it for a long time. Kaper did not run well, he hindered the movement of the other

dogs. Today too his behaviour in the traces had angered Alitet more than once. He would have to be taught a lesson.

Alitet stepped back and kicked the dog full in the face. Kaper leapt to his feet, drew in his tail and looked at his master from the corner of his eyes. Alitet seized him by the muzzle. Kaper tried to break away, but the man held him in an iron grip.

"Scared? Don't be scared, Kaper! Soon old Kamenvat will be your master. With that old man, my father-in-law, you may be as lazy as you please."

Keeping a firm hold on the dog's muzzle with one hand, Alitet stroked his back with the other. The dog trembled under the unaccustomed caress. It felt what was coming. His master's frequent shouts on the way had put him on his guard. Alitet picked up the brake pole. Kaper leapt aside, but the traces held him fast. As Alitet swung the pole Kaper howled and grovelled at his feet, hiding his eyes. Alitet stepped back and struck the dog on the head with all his might. Kaper lay flat on the snow, whining and whimpering and shrinking in a vain attempt to evade the blows that rained down on him.

The dog paired with Kaper bared its fangs and suddenly dug its teeth in Alitet's leg, tearing out a piece of the trousers. Alitet leapt aside, examined the rent, then walked over to the sled, picked up his Winchester and fired point-blank at the offending dog. Kaper leapt into the air. Alitet in a fury struck him another blow with his rifle butt. The other dogs turned away glumly from the ugly scene.

Alitet went back to the sled and no sooner had he taken his seat than the dogs pulled at the traces and set off at full speed down the steep slope.

The long string of dogs entered the winding gorge, with the sled pressing down on the heels of the rearmost. The team flew like a fleet-footed deer. Kaper fell and the sled ran over him. He was dragged along, howling, between the runners. Alitet brought the sled to an abrupt halt and a cloud of snow dust swept upwards. In an instant Kaper was on his feet and had run back to his place in the team glancing fearfully over his shoulder. Alitet drove over to a smooth spot and stopped the sled to untangle the traces.

The sky was aglow with light. Sandy River (The Milky Way) traced a bright path across the sky. Alitet sat down on the sled and gazed up at the heavenly lights.

"I am a man of the Sun God. I am known to all the people along the coast. All the Chuckchi know me. I am a great friend of Charlie, the Americano himself."

Thus Alitet soliloquized alone amid the boundless spaces. At the sound of their master's voice the dogs, mistaking his words for the order to move, tugged at the sled but the brake pole held it fast. They glanced around at the man but Alitet drove the brake pole deeper into the snow and gazing up at the sky continued to think aloud:

"Perhaps the heavenly folk know me too," he paused for a moment. "How brightly, the Hare Group (Cassiopeia) shines. And there's Bent Hook (The North Star) over there. And the stars that roll down the hill. There's Transparent Ribs (Venus). But where are the Giants who make the wind?"

Alitet studied the heavens carefully but could find no trace of the Giants.

"Old Vaal, he would know where to find it," thought Alitet. "A bad old man, but clever. And that son of his! Yet folks like them. Even though he never helps anyone. He could not, even if he wished."

Alitet knocked the ashes out of his pipe and listened to the loud cracking of the ice on the sea nearby.

When he looked up again long shafts of light stretched across the sky to the North Star like strips of walrus hide stretched between two yarangs. These shafts now extended all the way to Venus, now shot out in all directions like a frightened herd of deer. The tongues of coloured flame flickered and glowed and soon the whole sky was ablaze with hues that were not of this world. The pulsating bands of light spread up and down and across the sky. In the midst of this glorious riot of colour even the moon seemed pale and envious like an aging wife.

Alitet stood beside his sled, his face aglow. Now fear began to creep upon him, and he cast stealthy glances round him. But the ethereal conflagration did not last long, the glowing streamers

went out fitfully, and the moon once again dominated the sky surrounded by brilliant stars. In all his life Alitet had seldom seen such big northern lights.

Filling his pipe quickly, he struck a thick American match and lit up.

Beyond, the trail ran along the shore of the sea. Silence reigned. Now and again stars fell, and it seemed to Alitet that the "heavenly folk" were throwing them down onto the earth as one throws old useless heaters out of the yarang.

The team like some frightened bird sped over the pack ice climbing from one fantastically shaped ice cake to another. Alitet ran alongside lifting the sled over the steep crests of the hummocks and steering its progress. Now the sled would rise up and for an instant it would seem to hang in mid air and then it would fall back onto the ice. It creaked and groaned under the strain but held together. Alitet's sled was firmly tied with sturdy straps. There was not another sled like it along the coast and none who could drive a dog team as fast as he.

At last the team dashed into Yanrakenot settlement with a loud barking. In reply all the dogs in the settlement set up a howl. The sled stopped outside old Kamenvat's yarang.

Bareheaded and half-dressed the folk came running to see who had arrived and soon Alitet's sled was surrounded on all sides. Aye was among those who came out to greet the arrival. A bitter presentiment seized him when he saw who it was. Noticing the deerskin on Alitet's sled, he suddenly remembered his silver foxes and the popular belief associated with them... Why had Alitet stopped with his marriage offering outside Kamenvat's yarang? Perhaps he was merely on the way to somewhere else? But why then should he choose to stop at Kamenvat's home? Were there not hunters in the settlement richer than he?

Alitet's intentions were clear to all. Aye alone sought for an explanation for this unusual visit. Why had Alitet come to Kamenvat? Did he not know that Tygrena had been betrothed to Aye for many years? Every man and woman on the coast knew that.

The news fled from yarang to yarang as the bird in the tundra flies from hummock to hummock in summer.

A sudden weakness overcame Aye and he walked in silence back to his own yarang.

CHAPTER IX

Tygrena who had returned exhausted from a hunting trip lay stretched out on the reindeer skins fast asleep. Her long black braids looked even blacker against the white deerskin. She slept deeply and peacefully. Now and again a smile flitted over her face.

Beside her, gazing down at her young face, squatted her old mother.

The mother was reluctant to wake her. Presently Tygrena opened her eyes and seeing her mother there beside her, laughed softly, showing her white, even teeth. Her dark eyes glowed as they looked straight into her mother's.

"I had a dream," she said. "A good dream. Aye and I were living in a yarang of our own. There were many children, so many that there was no room to move. Aye said to me: 'Tygrena, we must enlarge our yarang. Let us go to the mountains and ask the reindeer herders for some skins.'"

Laughing gaily, Tygrena sat up on her couch and began to braid her long dark tresses. Suddenly the sound of voices outside caused her to stop short.

"Why is it so noisy outside our yarang?" she asked.

Her mother sighed deeply.

"Tygrena," she said in a low voice. "Alitet has arrived. His sled is outside and people say he has brought the skin of a young deer as a marriage offering. This is a great honour for us."

Tygrena's eyes widened in amazement and fear.

"But what about Aye?" she cried. "I have been his promised bride from childhood. Soon the day will come when we can live together. Have the people on the coast forgotten this? Do they think nothing of our laws? Why has Alitet, that old man, brought his deerskin here? He is cunning and greedy! He is treacherous. Aye wanted to buy me a rifle for one of his silver foxes, but Alitet did not let Red-Nose Charlie give it to him. I do not want to live in his foul dwelling. Let Aye take that deerskin and throw it into the sea!" Tygrena spoke with unwonted passion.

"My daughter, my ears are not accustomed to hear such words. You will bring misfortune upon us."

Tygrena rose to her feet in silence. She was already ashamed of her outburst. In her agitation she had braided only half of her hair and the loosened tresses covered her right shoulder. Tossing the hair over her shoulders she went to a corner of the tent and stood with her back to her mother, deep in thought. Her graceful, muscular young body, hardened by hunting and hard physical work, seemed to be carved in stone.

Tygrena was accustomed to the wide open spaces. Kamenvat, her father, had grown old and for a long time she had been obliged to go out hunting in place of him. But she had come to love the hard work of men, particularly the days of lucky hunting, and she would return home contented, happy and radiant. For some time she had been looking forward happily to the day when she and Aye would start a new life together. And now dark and terrible thoughts stirred within her. A mist rose before her eyes and the noise outside the yarang came to her as from a great distance.

"Perhaps this is only a bad dream?" she thought, and started at the sound of her mother's voice:

"Tygrena, we must prepare tea. Take the large kettle."

Obediently but with a heavy heart Tygrena went over to the stove and stirred up the fire while her mother laid out the best reindeer skin rugs for the guest.

Outside Kamenvat was bustling about with the fussiness of the aged attending to Alitet's dogs. He fetched a large chunk of frozen walrus meat and commenced to prepare food for the dogs. Now and again he cast an anxious glance at Aye's yarang. Kamenvat loved Aye like a son and he understood why Aye had not come to help him. It made the old man sad to think of Aye, his heart must be beating like that of a young deer scared by a wolf. But what was one to do? If anyone else had come to ask for his daughter the old man would have refused to talk to him. But how could you refuse Alitet? Alitet was a wealthy man, the son of the great shaman Korauge! How could you turn him away?

The old man wielded the axe clumsily in his efforts to chop up the frozen meat. Alitet stood aside watching him in silence. It was not fitting for a guest, especially such an important guest as Alitet, to prepare food for his own dogs. And so Alitet stood by waiting for his dogs to be fed. He couldn't trust such an important task to an old man who had never owned a decent dog sled. Aye stood on the threshold of his yarang kicking at the hard snow to hide his agitation. From time to time he glanced at the old man out of the corner of his eye. He felt sorry for Kamenvat. After all, he always helped him and Tygrena to chop the frozen meat which was as hard as rock.

"Now I shall not go and help him," he thought bitterly. "Alitet will take Tygrena away anyhow... No, but I must... I can't let the old man do it himself."

Torn by conflicting emotions, Aye walked over to Kamenvat and with a silent gesture asked him for the axe.

Kamenvat looked up, saw Aye, and dropped the axe in his confusion. Aye picked it up and began to chop the meat. Kamenvat looked on sadly for a while, then muttering something under his breath went back to his yarang.

As Aye chopped up the meat and laid the pieces in a trough Alitet said: "That one over there is Charlie, see he gets a piece with some fat in it. Two pieces."

Aye picked up the trough. The dogs leapt up and huddled close together, their muzzles upraised, ears alert, eyes sparkling.

"Charlie!" cried Alitet.

Aye threw a piece of meat and Charlie caught it in the air.

"Utilkhen!" Alitet called to another dog.

But instead of Utilkhen it was Kaper who caught the hunk in mid-air. Alitet lunged forward, seized Kaper by the throat, tore the meat out of his mouth and threw it to Utilkhen.

"Charlie!" And the lead dog got his second piece.

Thus, calling each dog by name, Alitet fed his team.

"That one also should get two pieces. See how his ribs are protruding."

Alitet knew that Tygrena was betrothed to Aye. The people who dwelt along the coast where so little happens from one moon to another, cherished such bits of news as a death, the birth of a child or a betrothal. Alitet knew that Tygrena had been intended for Aye from the day of her

birth. As children Tygrena and Aye had played together, and when they grew older they had gone hunting together and both looked forward eagerly to the time when they would be husband and wife.

"But when the fox finds a piece of meat in the tundra does not the wolf take it away from him? And he does not need to take it by force, the fox will run away himself as soon as the wolf approaches," thought Alitet as he watched Aye.

When the dogs had been fed, Alitet took the marriage offering and went into the yarang. He paused in the doorway and coughed to announce himself.

"Is that you, Alitet?" he heard Kamenvat's aged voice inquire.

"Yes, it is I," replied Alitet and he handed the skin of the young deer to the old man.

The old man accepted the gift.

Alitet had been quite confident of success from the first. Bending his head he crawled into the inner chamber. His smug, smiling face with its shifty eyes was flushed. Looking around the room his eye came to rest on Tygrena. She stood with her back to him braiding her hair. Kamenvat sat on a pile of skins with Alitet's deerskin in his hands.

"A fine skin," he said, smiling painfully as he handed it to his wife.

The woman rolled it up carefully and hung it up in a place of honour under the ceiling.

Tygrena's fate was decided quickly and finally.

In silence Tygrena placed the low table in the middle of the room and poured out tea.

"Tygrena, why do I see no joy in your face?" her mother asked. "See, what an honoured guest has entered our dwelling."

Tygrena did not raise her eyes. She appeared not to have heard her mother's question. For the first time in her life she did not reply to her parent. Perhaps, indeed, she was so preoccupied with her own sad thoughts that she had not heard.

Alitet glanced at Tygrena and bared his teeth in a smile.

"That is nothing," he said. "Happiness is like a snowflake. The wind blows and it rises. One must wait for a favourable wind."

Alitet stripped to the waist, moved toward the table and began to drink the tea. He spoke of the big walrus hunt of last summer, about the heavenly fires that had lighted his path. And all the time he did not once address Tygrena. It was not necessary. The time would come when all would fall in its place.

Alitet went outside to look at his dogs and Kamenvat accompanied him.

"My daughter!" said the old woman. "Now you will be a real woman. Your children will never go hungry. Alitet always has plenty of meat. But it will be bad if you have no children. Then you will not be a real woman."

Early the next morning Alitet left Kamenvat three dogs and set out for Enmakai with his young wife.

CHAPTER X

Tygrena sat in a corner of the room sewing fur boots from sealskins. Listlessly she cut a sole out of the skin and with unwilling fingers began turning in the edge. Presently the work fell from her hands and she sighed. A great change had come over Tygrena since she had come to Alitet's yarang. She who had always been so lighthearted and gay at home in Yanrakenot was gloomy and silent as a trapped vixen.

She had made fur boots from her childhood and had taken great pleasure in embroidering the tops with coloured nap. During the long winters she had made only a few pairs—for her father, for Aye and for herself, but how much pleasure she had derived from the work. And the whole settlement had praised the result of her handiwork.

Here in Alitet's home she had to make plain boots for the cattleherds. It was simple work but exhausting and uninteresting. She had made 20 pairs already and there seemed no end to it.

Alitet was always hurrying her. As soon as she had a good number ready he would take them along with the other goods to the interior of the tundra where the nomad deer herders dwelt.

As Tygrena sat working, her heart heavy within her, Alitet's first wife Narginaut came into the room. She sat down beside Tygrena and began to speak gently to her as a mother to her daughter.

"You work hard, my industrious child but Alitet takes such care of his people that two pairs a day is not enough. The tundra is vast. And there are a great many people in it."

"Why must he provide the nomads with shoes, Narginaut?" Tygrena asked.

"The nomads have no sealskin and the herders run about a great deal and so they need shoes."

"Yes, I know that. We also used to sew shoes for the nomads, but only for our kinsmen. Has Alitet so many kinsmen?"

"He exchanges these boots for white fox skins. All the women in the settlement sew for him and still it is not enough."

Tygrena laid down her sewing and listened to the gentle voice of Narginaut, who at first had seemed to her so forbidding.

"Did you sew much yourself, Narginaut?" she asked. "I see your hands are scratched."

"No. In the beginning we lived like other folk. I had three children and I was very happy. And then I lost everything. Alitet fell ill and Korauge said that the eldest boy should take off his disease. And so Alitet strangled the boy. The girl died the same way. And now my heart is dead too. I have no heart, Tygrena. It seems to have been torn out of me."

The two women sat in silence for a long while.

"And when Alitet made friends with the Americano," Narginaut continued, "he grew still worse. He became restless and rarely stayed at home. He was always off on some trip or another and he bought more and more dogs. He never seems to be satisfied with what is enough for most people. And he does not need wives to bear him children."

Tygrena listened to Narginaut in horror.

"Narginaut," she said sorrowfully, "I did not want to come here. I was promised to Aye from my childhood and I am sorry for him."

"I know. It is better for me to be with you. You will be my sister. You will make life easier for me."

Narginaut took the sewing from Tygrena.

"You have worked enough, Tygrena," she said. "Go for a walk. I shall do the sewing. Even old Korauge goes out of the yarang sometimes. Go to Vaamcho. You will find young folk there. Only be sure that Korauge does not see you there. He does not like Vaamcho."

"I want to go hunting, Narginaut. I want to go out to the ice fields where there is plenty of space. That is the life I am accustomed to."

"When Alitet returns I shall tell him. He will be glad. He has long ceased hunting himself and yet he wants more and more furs."

Tumatuge was building the third tent. Alitet had decided to put it up for the third wife, for each wife must live separately.

The wind was howling down the lane between the tents. Alitet did not return that night. He travelled much and often spent nights with his *nevtums*. Some of the hunters would exchange wives for a while. Sometimes one could meet a family whose head would say: this is my son, and this is my friend's son. Such a bond between two families called for mutual aid. And if one of the men died, the other took care of both families. But no one took advantage of this old custom as much as Alitet did. In nearly every settlement he had such friends. When Alitet came to his nevtum, the husband would go away, leaving him with his wife.

CHAPTER XI

Life in Enmakai flowed along in its customary groove. As soon as the blizzard ceased the hunters put out to sea. With their rifles encased in sheaths of sealskin they went among the ice fields looking for the patches of unfrozen water that formed under the action of the wind and the sea currents.

Before they left the settlement the hunters could tell by the reflection in the sky the size of the patches and their location. The large ones were like huge lakes with ice-clad banks and were not convenient for hunting, for it was difficult to get at a seal after it had been killed.

Dressed in white camouflage overall-like robes the hunters would take up their position behind the crest of a large chunk of ice and puff stolidly at their wooden pipes keeping their eyes glued to the water. The seals rarely showed themselves. But as soon as one would noiselessly emerge exposing its bewhiskered muzzle the crack of a Winchester rifle would echo in the still air. Waving its flippers the seal would disappear for a minute or two under water only to float slowly to the surface, its blood leaving a scarlet trail in the water.

Tygrena was a match for any of the Enmakai men at seal hunting. She gladly seized the opportunity to go out to the ice fields with the other hunters. Indeed, she would have gone anywhere to get away

from Korauge, from the people who had made a gloomy, humble creature of her.

For three days in succession the hunters had gone out to the ice fields, returning each time empty handed. On the fourth day a strong gale blew up from the shore, making it dangerous to remain on the ice fields. The hunters hurried back to the safety of their yarangs, Tygrena with them. No one had even seen a seal and in the yarangs the stocks of meat and fat were exhausted. When they returned to the settlement it was found that two men were missing: Alitet, who had not returned from a trip into the tundra, and Vaamcho who had been with the hunters on the ice fields.

"A most evil spirit has appeared on the coast," said Korauge. "It must be placated by a big sacrifice."

All was quiet within Alitet's yarang. As she drank the hot fragrant tea Tygrena was thinking: "Alitet has gone to the tundra to Echavto, the rich reindeer herder. He will surely come back. But what will happen to Vaamcho... He went off with his four dogs far out into the ice fields in search of good hunting. How I wish that it was Vaamcho who had gone to the tundra and Alitet who was stranded somewhere on the ice fields!"

At that moment she looked up and found the eyes of the witch doctor fixed on her. Tygrena turned away and began hurriedly to count the deerskins. How had the old man guessed her wicked thoughts she marvelled. Fear clutched at her heart, causing it to beat wildly. Feeling that she would suffocate if she stayed in the hut for another moment she dressed quickly and went outside.

She was much worried about Vaamcho. One could not help being sorry for a good man. She pictured Vaamcho sitting somewhere at that moment among the ice, hiding from the gale.

"Where shall I go?" Tygrena wondered. The wind blew in violent gusts and in the rising blizzard the yarangs were almost hidden from view. From the sea came the sound of moving ice.

"I shall go to Vaal," Tygrena decided and swept along by the wind she hurried toward the old man's yarang.

Eight hunters were seated in a circle with the old man in the middle. A heavy silence filled the room. No one noticed that the heater was smoking.

Tygrena wedged in among the hunters and adjusted the moss in the heater. She was afraid to ask after Vaamcho and sat silently in a corner. It was already late and by now it was clear to them all that Vaamcho had been carried out to sea.

Old Vaal sat with his head bowed. He did not even smoke. He passed the palm over his face and finding it wet he said in a low voice:

"Never have I seen these tears. I am grown old. I cannot hold them back."

He stared long at his hand with the fingers outspread, as though about to clutch at something. Suspended thus in mid air the hand seemed turned to stone.

"Where is Vaamcho's other robe?" Tygrena asked breaking the silence.

Vaal pointed to the outer room. The hunters brought in Vaamcho's spare robe and began stuffing it with rags and other household rubbish to make an effigy. By the time the dummy was ready, all that remained of the poor household were two small skins.

"Perhaps it is not enough?" he said. "Take these too. I shall not sleep in any case."

They carried the effigy carefully into the outer room.

CHAPTER XII

Tygrena heard the hollow throb of the drum before she reached the yarang. She paused outside for a moment, but the wind threatened to sweep her off her feet, so she hurried inside and stood in the outer chamber listening with a fast beating heart to the witch doctor's chanting and the beat of the drum. The whole yarang seemed to echo with the sounds which like living creatures flew from wall to wall, from floor to ceiling. Tygrena pictured the unsmiling face of Korauge and shuddered.

At that moment she felt something touch her foot in the darkness. Terror seized her, intensified by the rolling echo of the drum from the inner chamber. She wanted to flee from the darkness into the light of the other room but her feet seemed rooted to the spot. Suddenly she heard a familiar whine, and a wave of relief swept over her as she realized that it was the old dog that had caused her terror. She knelt down and pressed the animal's warm muzzle to her breast, stroking it gently.

"Cease, oh, Wind," came the shaman's voice from the other room.

"Many days has Alitet been gone.

"Spirits, make the weather fine,

"Take Vaamcho as an offering. . . ."

Tygrena caught her breath and crouched closer to the dog.

Again the drum throbbed, and for a long while Korauge kept up his frenzied communion with the spirits.

"You are lucky to be a dog!" Tygrena whispered to the bitch in her arms. "I don't want to go inside and meet the old man's eyes. I wish I could sleep with you out here in the darkness."

Again the words of the witch doctor's chant came to her from the adjoining chamber.

"His yarang is the source of misfortune. . . Ilineut froze to death. . . Vaamcho . . . the spirits. . . ."

The drum drowned out the rest.

Tygrena sat for a long while hugging the dog close until silence fell in the next room, broken only by the hoarse gasps of the exhausted shaman.

Tygrena's limbs were numb and frozen from crouching motionless for so long. Slowly and painfully she rose to her feet and crawled into the chamber. She snuffed out the heaters and was undressing hastily in the darkness when Korauge's hoarse voice croaked suddenly:

"In such weather even animals do not venture from their lairs. Is it fitting that you roam about when your husband is away?"

Without mentioning Vaamcho's name Tygrena said:

"There is great mourning in the settlement, Korauge. A man has been carried away by the ice. An effigy has been made. Is it not natural that I should wish to know whether the man is alive or dead. Hark at the wind!"

"I hear all and know all. Why wander forth to seek grief in other men's yarangs. Anything may happen. Alitet . . ." but fearing to wish the spirits on to Alitet, the shaman stopped short.

"Who knows, Korauge, what the evil spirits are scheming? Were you not about to say that perhaps Alitet has lost his way in the storm and has fallen from a precipice?" Tygrena asked emboldened by the darkness.

"Hold your peace," Korauge hissed. "Your woman's tongue wags without reason."

Secretly Tygrena hoped that Alitet had indeed fallen off a cliff somewhere. After all, such accidents did happen even to good men.

All night long the gale raged with unabated fury. Old Vaal's yarang, where the hunters kept their vigil, trembled as the furious gusts hit it. Whenever the wind, penetrating into the cracks of the outer chamber, caused the effigy to stir, the two hunters who sat watching it shouted the glad tidings to the old man.

A smile of joy lit up the old Vaal's careworn face when he heard it, for that was a sure sign that Vaamcho still lived.

The next day more hunters came running with the news that the sky was clearing up and each hunter tried his best to find something cheering to report to old Vaal.

"The wind is likely to turn soon and he will be carried back to the shore."

"Vaal, the clouds are disappearing. The wind is dying down. He will be saved."

"We must ask Korauge to turn the wind for him."

Old Vaal's eyes were sad and thoughtful as he listened to the hunters.

"Fill my pipe. My soul yearns for a smoke," he said dejectedly.

Tygrena entered the yarang.

"Vaal," she said. "The weather is going to be fine soon. The blizzard will be over and he will return before long. I am sure of it."

The old man shook his head. Tygrena, who had brought some fat with her, adjusted the heater.

"It was Narginaut who told me to bring the fat. She is a kindly woman."

CHAPTER XIII

Two days before, when Vaamcho had returned with other hunters empty handed from the hunt, old Vaal had said:

"The seals are now far away, over at the farthest water holes."

Vaamcho listened in silence and apparent indifference to his father's words. Old Vaal was a great hunter and knew what he was talking about. But who would venture so far from the shore when the ice had begun to move?

But hunger stalked the coast. Seal hunting was the sole topic of conversation in all the yarangs. Foxes had ceased to interest anyone. Men hunted foxes only when they had enough to eat. You exchanged foxskins for goods. A man could live without goods, but without food men died.

Vaamcho did not want to ask Alitet for any more meat. He decided to try his luck on the distant pools of unfrozen water of which his father had spoken.

The following morning he harnessed four dogs to a light sled and set off for the ice fields.

It was still dark and the yarangs scattered over the hillside soon disappeared from view. Vaamcho rode for a long while over the pack ice. Presently the moon rose. It cast its pale glow over the ice and the dogs picked up speed at the cheering sight. At last Vaamcho espied an open space of water in the distance.

"There will be seals over there!" he thought, and a thrill of excitement ran through him.

He called to Chegyt, his lead dog, and the animal obediently turned to the right. Presently Vaamcho stopped the dogs, climbed onto the crest of the ice and surveyed the icescape. A strip of calm open sea was visible in the distance. A light mist rose from the water. Vaamcho climbed off the ice, took his seat in the sled and calling to the dogs dashed off toward the water.

"I'll stay here. I shall hide behind this iceberg; from here I can well observe the seals," said Vaamcho aloud.

He drove his dog team to one side and returned alone to the open expanse of water. Soon he had completed all the necessary preparations for the hunt, loaded his pipe and lit it while waiting for his quarry to appear. But hardly had he returned the tobacco tin to his pocket when he spotted a seal nearby swimming smoothly through the water. Vaamcho could not believe his eyes and his heart pounded with joy, but by the time he had himself in hand and was ready to shoot, the seal had vanished. Vaamcho stared for a long time at the ripples the animal had left in its wake, and then these too disappeared.

"But there are seals here!" Vaamcho thought and a smile of satisfaction spread over his features. Laying his gun on his knee he again began puffing at his pipe.

Another seal appeared only to dive again.

"What's this? Maybe they scent the tobacco, or the dogs? Probably they do, the wind's blowing out to sea," Vaamcho deliberated.

He got up and walked over to his dogs. After driving them farther away behind a hummock of ice, he returned to watch the dark strip of open water ahead of him. He noticed that it was growing wider.

Vaamcho's eyes anxiously scanned the murky sea in search of seals.

Then he saw one. It was swimming lazily parallel to the edge of the ice, heading straight for the hunter as if bent on investigating the intruder. The seal stared straight at Vaamcho with its big black eyes, its sparse moustache bristling above the surface of the water.

Vaamcho's finger pressed down on the trigger, and the stupid seal was dead. The jubilant hunter sprang to his feet.

"Got him!" he cried aloud, his eyes shining.

He ran to the edge of the ice and hurled his harpoon at the floating carcase, but it fell short: the thong was too short. The world blackened in Vaamcho's eyes: he knew that the seal he had killed would drift away from him. Only now he realized that the wind had grown stronger. Climbing on top of an ice hummock he looked out toward land.

"The wind's strong," he thought. "The sky too is bad." He decided to turn back at once. Yet something compelled him to take one more look at the seal floating in the water.

The sea was calm. It barely heaved and seemed to consist of some thick liquid. And in this dense, dark mass lit up by the moon lay the seal, and Vaamcho could not tear his eyes away from it.

Once more he picked up the coiled harpoon thong, tied his belt to it to make it longer, and decided to make just one more try. It fell short again though this time the harpoon hit the water close enough to rock the carcase. Vaamcho recalled his childhood games when he had recovered floating sticks and bits of board from the water by throwing stones at them from the shore. The waves thus raised would drive the floating object shorewards; only you had to hit the water on the near side of the object.

Hoping to recover the seal in this way he threw his harpoon over and over again. It almost hit the carcase, and Vaamcho tensely waited for the moment when the harpoon would reach it; then he would drive the prongs into the skin and haul in his catch!

Suddenly he realized that the ice floe he was on was moving. In a flash

he raced toward the dogs, but where the hummock had been there was now a fissure and the floe was slowly carrying Vaamcho away from the main ice field. The fissure was too wide for even Vaamcho to jump, and he frantically dashed from one side of the floe to the other.

"The dogs . . . the dogs are on the other side," the terrible thought sent tremors through his whole body. Vaamcho ran to the spot nearest to where he had left his dogs. He stopped and whistled so loudly that the echo rolled among the hummocks of ice scattered in the frigid desert.

"Chegyt, Chegyt, Chegyt!" he called.

The team plunged into view from behind an icy ridge and dashed toward the master's voice. The light sled had tipped over and was now dragging on its side behind the running dogs. At the water's edge the dogs stopped; there was no crossing the wide strip of black, gloomy water that separated them from Vaamcho.

"Here, Chegyt," the man urged on the dog, slapping his buckskin boots with his hands.

Chegyt looked at the water, whined, then led the team along the edge of the ice.

"It's bad to be left alone here," thought Vaamcho. "It would be so much better with the dogs." And again he called to the dogs.

The lead dog once more ran to the water's edge, dragging the team behind him. He looked down into the water and backed away. Raising his muzzle, he howled mournfully.

"No, they won't go into the water," Vaamcho thought. "But they too are sure to be cast adrift, for they will not go home alone. Then we all will be drifting, but on different floes."

Vaamcho stood there and thought of his dogs and what good friends they were. The dogs seemed to understand him and could not take their eyes off their master. Turning their noses upwards, they kept gazing at him. "If I stay here alone, I shall wait for four days, and then I'll shoot myself."

And again Vaamcho started calling Chegyt.

The clever animal dashed to the water's edge, sniffed the ice and sprang back. Again Vaamcho called, and this time Chegyt leapt into the water, but was held back by the other dogs straining on the ice. His claws sending chips of ice flying, Chegyt climbed back on the floe and baring his fangs made a vicious pass at the throat of his neighbour.

Vaamcho quickly removed the coil of thong from his belt and hurled the harpoon at the dog sled on the other side of the rift. The prongs held, and he drew both sled and dogs into the water. Once in, they swam toward him.

The seal hunter was overjoyed. Now he was no longer alone, and he fondly caressed the dogs who between shaking the icy water off their dripping coats were busy licking his hands. Vaamcho quickly unharnessed the animals who set to rolling in the snow, and soon their long fur was covered with icicles. Vaamcho sat next to Chegyt and began breaking off the chunks of ice from his skin with the handle of his knife, while the other dogs busied themselves pulling icicles off their coats with their teeth.

The wind was rising. The moon sank behind the ice hummocks. Night fell.

CHAPTER XIV

Vaamcho picked up his sled and with the dogs crowding around him slowly moved toward the pack ice. It would afford him shelter from the icy wind.

"Well, Chegyt, the wind is rising and we must build ourselves a house," he said. The lead dog wagged his tail as if in approval of his master's decision.

Examining the ice from all sides Vaamcho picked out the most convenient spot, and commenced to hew into it with his knife. It was hard work, but Vaamcho toiled doggedly until at last he built a rude shelter for himself and the dogs.

Ensconsed in the igloo with the dogs, Vaamcho settled down to wait for the blizzard to blow over. He was thirsty but he knew that it was useless to try to quench his thirst with snow. He remembered how once as he was about to cut off his moustache his father had stopped him.

"Every hunter ought to take care of his moustache as he takes care of his dogs. Sometimes a hunter is strand-

ed without water for a long time. But whiskers produce water. Fresh-water hoarfrost clings to them."

Crouching there in his hand-made ice cave Vaamcho remembered his father's words, and the kind face of the old man rose before his eyes.

It was midnight. The wind howled and roared over the ice field. Warmed by the dogs Vaamcho fell asleep. But soon he was awake again worrying over his plight.

"How could it have happened?" he wondered. "Evidently the wind had pressed on the pack ice which catches every gust like the sails of a boat. And the ice farthest from the shore gave way sooner than the rest."

The dogs slept as peacefully as if they were at home. Only Chegyt raised his head at every sound and his eyes glittered in the darkness. Vaamcho was thankful that he was not alone.

"What shall we do, Chegyt? If the weather improves we must kill a seal whatever happens. Without food we shall surely perish."

By noon the next day, when the sky was somewhat lighter and the moon broke through the heavy clouds, Vaamcho crawled out of his lair, and with his rifle in his hand and the dogs, from whom he resolved never again to be separated, at his heels he repaired to the edge of the ice floe. Taking cover behind a jutting piece of ice Vaamcho squatted down and scanned the waters of the open stretch. He soon realized that there would be no seals that day. The wind was still too high.

"It looks bad, Chegyt," he confided sadly to the dog.

Chegyt rose and came over to Vaamcho and licked his ear.

"Very well. Let us go home. You shouldn't sit long in the cold with nothing inside you," said Vaamcho. Rising slowly to his feet, he followed the dogs back to the igloo.

"I should never have started out," he thought remorsefully. "When someone dies in the yarang it is forbidden to hunt for thirty days. And Ilineut, my mother, froze to death only 26 days ago. I broke the law and so the evil spirits are after me. I ought to have waited a while. But how could I wait when there was no food. Even at home a man can perish without food. And here perhaps I will not perish. After all I am not alone!"

Two days passed. The ice jammed together and there was no longer any water. Neither were there any seals.

On the third day Vaamcho was forced to kill one of his dogs to save himself and the other animals from starving to death.

Sadly he took Milyutalgyn by the collar and led him aside. He plunged the knife into the dog's heart before the animal had time to utter a sound. Greedily he drank the warm blood and ate his fill of the fresh meat. Then he returned to the igloo and fed the dogs. That night he slept soundly with Milyutalgyn's skin as a blanket.

In the morning Vaamcho was awakened by a moonbeam shining through a crack in the block of ice that served for a door. Kicking it aside he went outside and surveyed the scene. A new pool of water had formed nearby. The water was calm, the wind had died down and only a faint swell caused the ice floe to sway gently up and down.

Suddenly Vaamcho saw a seal swimming close by. In an instant he had shouldered his rifle and shot the animal at almost point-blank range.

This was only the beginning. Within a short time he had killed four more seals and hauled all five of them safely ashore.

"Now we have enough meat to last us for a long time, Chegyt," he said gaily. "And we must save our bullets too. What a pity we killed Milyutalgyn. If only we had waited a little longer!"

He tied the seal carcases together and dragged them to his lair. The dogs licked their chops at the sight of so much food and devoured chunks of snow saturated with seal blood.

As he blew up the fire he had built with seal bones, fat and rufts of dog's fur, Vaamcho laughed. "How many days were we miserable, Chegyt? And now we can laugh again. Laughter always comes with food. A man feels good when his belly is stuffed with seal meat and hot water. It is when the wind roams in his empty guts that he is sad."

"Who knows, Chegyt," Vaamcho speculated as he sipped hot water from his tobacco box, "maybe we'll bag a white bear too. Then we will be no worse off than in a yarang!"

CHAPTER XV

Innumerable were the herds of reindeer that belonged to Echavto. Untold riches were his. Three hot summers could not revive the tundra grasses after his herd had passed over it. His reindeer were divided into ten herds. In each herd there were twenty times twenty and again twenty times twenty—1,200 head in each herd! You could not keep them all in one herd. They would perish for want of moss.

Great indeed was his reindeer herd. In each herd there were a dozen tents where the herdsmen dwelt with their families. More than a hundred people tended Echavto's reindeer.

Echavto permitted every herdsman to raise a few reindeer of his own. Thus the herdsman felt that he too was a reindeer breeder and hence he worked harder than ever to guard Echavto's herd which grew ever greater.

What did it matter to Echavto if the wolves devoured twenty of his deer, it would be no more painful than the bite of a mosquito. But if the herdsman's own four or five animals were lost it would take years of hard work to replace them. . . .

For three days Alitet had been searching for Echavto's herds. Borne along by his swift-footed dogs he sought them in the gorges and canyons and on the boundless tundra. A man must be endowed with an animal's scent to find them in this wilderness.

The wind roamed over the tundra. Stars and moon had vanished from sight. He ought to have sat out the blizzard somewhere in the snow, but he had no food and hence he could not stop. He must drive on further and further. All he had on his sled were goods. Not a morsel of meat.

The wind howled and raged and the dogs barely managed to keep on their feet. Alitet stopped the team, threw himself onto the ground and crawling on his hands and knees explored the ground carefully. After a brief search he found a piece of dried reindeer dropping, examined it and knew approximately how long ago the herd had passed this way. Then, clearing a small patch in the snow, he studied the condition of the moss and tundra grass to determine which direction the herd had taken.

Soon Alitet's sled was on its way again, tearing across the tundra against the wind. At last the lead dog sniffed the scent of human habitation, turned sharply to the left and flew forward at top speed. Peering into the gloom Alitet saw a figure coming toward the sled. Alitet pulled up sharply.

"Who are you?" he called out.

The man recognized Alitet and greeted him by name.

"I am Rento, one of Echavto's herdsmen. I am on my way to help guard the herd. It is a bad night. Hark at the wind? On such nights the wolves prowl."

"Is the herd far away from here?"

"No. It is not far. You could run there and only sweat twice on the way."

"And where do the yarangs stand?"

"Close by. I can show you." And the herdsman ran on ahead of the dogs.

"You run well," said Alitet when they reached the settlement."

"Yes, I run well," Rento replied, beaming at the praise.

"Is Echavto in this settlement?"

"No, he is in another. But stay the night here and perhaps tomorrow the blizzard will subside. Why should you forsake warmth? Here are the yarangs. The men are out with the herd. The women will take care of you."

"Is there anyone here who would feed my dogs well?"

Rento, the herdsman, made no answer.

"Is it a long way to Echavto's other herd?"

"No. If you run all the way you would sweat about ten times. But stay until tomorrow."

"No. You run ahead and I shall follow you."

"Egei!" Rento agreed humbly. And casting a wistful glance at the yarangs he ran forward into the cold snowy wilderness.

Soon he had disappeared from view, leaving only his tracks for Charlie, the lead dog, to follow. Now and then he would halt and call:

"Eg-ei!" which meant: "Here I am!"

At last they reached the settlement.

"Well, here are the yarangs," said Alitet's guide leaning on his stick. "Now I shall run back to the herd."

"Wait. Take some of this good tobacco for a smoke."

Rento beamed with gratitude.

"Have Echavto's people caught many foxes this season?"

"Oh, yes, very many."

"Good. Now you had better be going."

Gaily Rento sprinted off.

Alitet's arrival caused much excitement in Echavto's settlement. It was as though a long night had ended and folks were stirring.

Old Echavto too roused himself. Lying on his couch of soft reindeer skins, his aged body covered with a goatskin blanket, he issued instructions to his four wives who had rushed in with the news.

"Eipynga," he said stroking his long sparse beard. "You go outside and give Alitet some meat. Choose the worst. Those people from the seashore are rat eaters, they do not appreciate good venison. All they want is something to stuff their bellies with."

"You mean meat for his dogs, Echavto?"

"It makes no difference. Those people eat the same food as their dogs. But make sure that he has enough to satisfy him. And you, Kyma, go to Pilyak and tell him to run to the pasture and bring back the young bullock with the white stripe on his upper lip."

"Echavto! The blizzard rages. Will Pilyak find the bullock among the herd?"

"Foolish woman! Do as you are told. Am I asking too much of you? He will find it. You, Keipa, light another heater. No, light two. Echavto is not so poor that he must receive his guest in darkness. And a business guest besides. Viya, there is work for you too. Find my finest doeskin trousers and thrust me inside them. Otherwise the guest will think that I am so poor that I have no clothing other than my own skin."

Alitet entered the chamber.

"Ah, you have come Alitet," Echavto said with a great show of indifference.

"Yes," replied the guest and threw himself onto the pile of skins, rubbing his frozen hands.

"And so the rumour has reached you that we need goods? We do not need much."

"Yes, the rumour has come. I have brought a few things with me. I have knives and files, and bells for your reindeer, and needles and beads and rifles and tobacco. Just a few things."

At the mention of each article the women threw up their hands and gasped in amazement, until old Echavto scowled at them and they subsided. The old man contented himself with a mere nod indicating his approval of Alitet's catalogue.

"Keipa!" he said, "How can our guest talk when his throat is dry? Where is the tea?"

While dark-skinned Keipa, as supple as a young fox, was pouring tea, Alitet went to the outer chamber where his bag lay. He expected to drink tonight and in order that the fiery liquid should not befuddle his head Alitet swallowed a large piece of butter he had taken from Charlie especially for this purpose. With butter the firewater burns your guts but does not make you crazy, and Alitet had not come here for pleasure.

He returned to the room and with the air of a great benefactor tossed a heap of rusks onto the small table.

The women cried out in delight. Tea with rusks was food for the gods.

"Women are born gluttons," observed Echavto. "The foolish creatures would swallow their own tongues together with these rusks."

"It is white man's food," said Alitet in a tone of authority.

"Foul food, I shall not touch it," was Echavto's response. Then after a pause he got down to business. "My people have caught a few red foxes," he began warily.

"And white foxes and silver foxes as well," Keipa, the chatterbox, blurted out.

"Hush!" hissed Echavto. That woman had to be stopped before she spoiled everything.

"What are you sitting there like owls for!" he addressed his wives sternly. "Do you think that the guest must continue rinsing his guts with water forever? Have you forgotten that a traveller needs food? Or perhaps you think Echavto has not enough food? Make haste and prepare the best meal served in my house."

The women scattered about in all directions like frightened mice, eager to do their master's bidding. Indeed they would have done anything to please the important guest. Guests in the tundra are very rare.

With her strong young teeth Keipa tore up the reindeer meat, chewed it and laid in a small trough-like vessel, and after mixing it with reindeer brains,

rolled small patties from the grey mass. These she carried outside to freeze.

The other women beat the frozen raw meat with stone hammers, cut up the cooked venison, fished reindeer tongues out of a cauldron, prepared a salad of green leaves, edible herbs and roots flavoured with seal fat. What a quant ty of rich and tasty food they prepared! It does not take long four women to cook delicious food when there is an abundance of everything in the household.

Echavto moved closer to Alitet and said in a businesslike tone:

"From bad meat the stomach swells. I can eat only reindeer tongues, light fat and the meat of young calves. I have sent for a good calf."

He paused for a few moments and then in a low voice breathless with anticipation he asked: "Have you any vodka?"

"Alitet always has vodka."

Echavto sighed with relief.

"Echavto," said Alitet, "I haven't any reindeer. No live reindeer. No herd. We are poor folk down there on the coast. If there is hunting in the sea, there is food. But when there is no hunting there is no food. But a man who has reindeer need never go hungry. He does not need to go out to the sea to look for a reindeer. That is why I want to raise a herd of my own."

A wary look crept into the old man's face.

"We here in the tundra are also poor folk," he said evasively. "Often the wolves carry off the reindeer, or ice covers the pasture lands or else disease attacks the herd. Down there on the seacoast you know nothing of these things. The wolves do not devour seals and walruses."

Echavto signed to his wives to serve the food. The women hurried forward with their large wooden platters piled high with savoury food. Echavto tasted a morsel from each platter himself before offering it to his guest. Alitet took a large reindeer tongue, cut it up hastily and swallowed the pieces greedily. The tender meat melted in the mouth. Keipa pushed a platter of brain patties toward the guest. Served only on festive occasions the patties, or prerem as they are called, are so delicious that you are tempted to swallow your own tongue along with them.

Echavto's eyes sparkled as Alitet grandly placed a bottle of diluted spirits on the table. With trembling hands his host reached for the bottle.

"It is good, this firewater. The bitterest cold cannot freeze it," said Alitet pouring out vodka and clinking mugs with his host. The women snatched the rusks and began crunching them with intense satisfaction.

Echavto drank the spirits down in one gulp and gasped as the flame ran through his body. He was careful not to eat anything so as not to spoil the effect of the vodka.

"Why did you touch your cup to mine, Alitet?" he asked. "Would you like to be marriage partners with me? Eh? See how many wives I have?"

Alitet's head reeled pleasantly at this sudden turn in the conversation. He had long since wished to strengthen his business ties with Echavto through a marriage partnership. But with characteristic cunning he feigned indifference to the offer.

"I have a friend, an Americano," he said approaching the subject warily. "Whenever we drink firewater together he clinks cups with me. That is the white man's custom and firewater is made in the white man's land."

"What you say about a marriage partnership does my heart good," he went on. "I have two wives already, Echavto. Soon there will be three. And why indeed should we not conclude a marriage pact?"

When they drank another mugful of the fiery water Echavto handed Alitet his pipe and Alitet offered him his.

In the meantime the women were whispering excitedly among themselves. It was obvious to them that the compact had been made. The only thing that remained now was for Alitet to choose among them.

"Bring my goods here!" Alitet shouted to the women, already with an air of proprietorship.

The women rushed out to carry the goods in from the sled. Oh, what a wealth of goods there was! The old man crawled on all fours among the plugs of tobacco, the bricks of tea and the diverse other wares strewn on the floor, greedily fingering each article.

"It is all yours, Echavto. Take it all. Are you not my nevtum now?"

The old man crowed with delight.

"You shall have all the fox skins, white, blue and silver, every one of them."

From the bottom of his deep bag Alitet pulled out ten brand new shiny Winchesters. A whole mountain of weapons!

Echavto was literally trembling with joy by now.

"It is all for you, my friend."

"Hok! Khrr!" exclaimed Echavto, "You shall get twenty live reindeer for each of these rifles."

Alitet caught his breath in amazement and pleasure.

"Women," cried Echavto, "bring a reindeer ear and let Alitet show us what mark he wishes to be branded on his deer."

Keipa ran outside and came back with a whole reindeer head. Alitet seized it and quickly made two small cuts on the tip of the ear.

"That shall be my mark, friend!" he cried and pulled out another bottle to clinch the bargain.

"Women, where are your cups? Let me fill them."

"Don't waste it on them," Echavto protested. "I'll drink it later."

"I have plenty more for you, friend!" Alitet consoled him.

"Hok! Khrr! Very well. Drink, then, women!" the old man cried in a feeble voice, crawling about on the skins. The drink had gone to his head. Echavto crouched huddled in a corner.

The strong spirits went straight to the women's heads and they began to sing and dance, swaying their bronzed bodies in rhythm to the music.

CHAPTER XVI

The ice floe turned in the direction of the shore. The wind was now blowing from the sea. Vaamcho followed every gust anxiously. He could not sleep any longer, and all night he and the dogs had paced up and down their "island" watching the movement of the ice floes. There was a heavy gale all night, and by morning the wind had pressed the ice against the shoreline with terrific force.

"Look, Chegyt, there's land over there. The beach!" cried Vaamcho urging his team across the floe toward the coast line. Far behind them the ice began to pack, filling the air with a menacing roar.

Around noon Vaamcho finally reached the shore. At the sight of the familiar coast line a wave of relief swept over him. Still reluctant to believe that he was really out of danger he hastily dug up the snow until the sight of the dark earth below reassured him.

In the distance he recognized the contours of Prkatagen cape. There was a settlement there at the foot of the hill. From thence to Enmakai was a day's journey with a good team.

"Well, Chegyt, we are home at last!" he cried gaily. "There are yarangs beyond that hill. Now we can sit down and have a smoke."

Seated on a log washed up by the sea, Vaamcho puffed peacefully on his pipe.

After a while he knocked out the ashes, took his seat on the sled and shouting encouragement to the dogs was off at full speed to the settlement.

The news of Vaamcho's misfortune had already reached this settlement, and his arrival caused a flurry of excitement. He stopped his sled outside the yarang where Nuvat the hunter dwelt. Inside the warm tent, he undressed for the first time in many days, revelling in the pleasant touch of the reindeer skins on the naked body.

"We all thought you were lost. The effigy did not stir. Vaal actually wept. No doubt he is weeping at this very moment," they told him.

"And your shaman said that Vaal's yarang ought to be moved elsewhere. They say that Vaal planned to move to our settlement," was the report delivered by one young lad fresh from Enmakai.

When Vaamcho had eaten and drunk his fill of boiled meat and strong tea, he set out that same night for home.

"You ought to wait, Vaamcho," the hunters cautioned. "There is a blizzard coming up. Why venture out from the warmth into a snowstorm?" Vaamcho laughed.

"A snowstorm is nothing to be afraid of on land," he replied.

With two extra dogs added to his team Vaamcho set off at a good pace, and vanished in the blizzard. He knew every hill and every slope along the coast.

As if in league with the witch doctor, the wind howled, whipping the hard snow against his face and sweeping the dogs off their feet. The animals could not understand why Vaamcho was urging them on, for he had never ventured forth in such weather.

But Chegyt knew the way and after a while Vaamcho left it to the clever lead dog to bring them to safety. And Chegyt trotted along confidently, running now in a straight line, now turning suddenly to right or left as he searched for the trail that ran along the beach.

Vaamcho travelled on without stopping. Finally the dogs who had been running smoothly at a good pace throughout the journey suddenly darted forward at a gallop. Vaamcho rejoiced. That meant the trail had ended and they had reached Enmakai at last.

His heart leapt as he saw the familiar contours of the settlement before him. The dogs, as excited as their master, dashed headlong into a snowdrift, dragging the sled after them. Mountains of snow were piled around the yarangs.

As Vaamcho entered his own yarang a familiar voice called: "Who's there?" It was Tygrena.

"It is I," replied Vaamcho.

Old Vaal, stumbling in his haste, ran forward at the sound of his son's voice, and a glad smile lit up his aged face as he saw Vaamcho in the outer room hanging his rifle on the hook..

"Vaamcho, you have returned?"

Vaamcho entered the room and sat silently opposite his father. The old man broke the silence first.

"See, Tygrena has taken care of the heater. She brought fat. . . ."

Tygrena sat some distance away and gazed happily at Vaamcho. It seemed she scarcely believed he was really there. She held a little stick in her hand for tending the moss in the heater.

"Look, Tygrena, the heater is smoking," said Vaamcho.

She emerged from her trance, and hastened to adjust the heater.

CHAPTER XVII

The people of Enmakai rejoiced at Vaamcho's return as they rejoiced at the birth of an infant.

When Tygrena came home and Korauge, the shaman, heard that Vaamcho had returned, he said:

"Chegyt must be sacrificed to Kele."[1]

Vaal sighed when he heard the verdict.

"Vaamcho," he said softly. "We shall have to sacrifice Chegyt."

"Father, I cannot do it. We went through it all together. I should have perished without him. I love him dearly. He is a fine dog and as clever as a man. We will never have another dog like him. How can I kill him?"

Vaamcho spoke in a voice of pleading. Tears stood in his eyes. For he knew that his entreaties would be in vain. He knew that the sacrifice would have to be made but he could not understand why the choice had fallen on Chegyt whom they all loved so much.

"Father, is it not all the same to the spirits which dog we sacrifice to them? Why is Korauge forcing me to kill Chegyt? I cannot do it."

"Vaamcho, you speak unwisely. Your words are like knives in my heart. What if the people should hear you? What if your words come to the ears of Korauge. Then the evil spirits will never leave our yarang. And you have many years left to live."

Vaamcho went outside. As he passed the dogs he turned away so as not to meet Chegyt's eyes. For he knew he could not hide anything from the dog.

He walked past the yarangs and stood on the beach, looking out at the sea.

"I must go straight up to Chegyt and take him. Why do I delay it? Why have I come out all this way?"

Vaamcho pulled out his knife and ran a finger lightly over the blade. It was as sharp as a razor. With his heart beating fast Vaamcho walked slowly toward the dogs.

Chegyt was lying curled up, with his face hidden between his paws. But at Vaamcho's approach he raised his head and his eyes lit up in greeting. Vaamcho called him over. He rose, stretched his back, yawned lazily, shook himself and wagged his fluffy tail.

With Chegyt at his heels, Vaamcho walked in gloomy silence, passed the yarangs and went out beyond the settlement. There he paused and sat down to rest on a hummock. Chegyt stretched out at his feet. Suddenly with a swift movement Vaamcho seized the dog, pressed its head between his knees and raised the knife. But he could not bring himself to plunge it into the dog's heart. He threw down the knife and buried his face in his hands.

"You know, Chegyt, what I intend to do to you," Vaamcho said to himself, fearing to say the words aloud.

[1] The Evil Spirit.

Chegyt lay on his back in the snow, his paws waving in the air.

Vaamcho's face grew dark and spiteful, distorted with grief.

"Am I a wolf? No, I am not a wolf. It is Korauge who is forcing me to do this! No doubt he wants me to kill Chegyt because I refused to give him to Alitet." He uttered an oath: "No, I am worse than a wolf. A reindeer cannot be the friend of a wolf. But Chegyt is my friend."

At length he rose wearily and Chegyt also was on his feet in an instant.

"Come, Chegyt! Let us go beyond the far hummock."

Vaamcho walked as though his feet were weighted with lead.

He stole a glance at the dog and it seemed to him that Chegyt knew very well where he was going. He was as gloomy and listless as his master. He walked along slowly with his head lowered.

"Ai!" Vaamcho cried out in anguish. He felt as if his heart were breaking. Chegyt raised his head and looked affectionately at his master.

Vaamcho felt that he could endure that look no longer. He turned away and stood for a long time motionless. Then he turned swiftly, seized Chegyt by the muzzle and in an instant plunged the knife into his heart up to the hilt.

He wanted to pull out the knife but his arms would not obey him. Tears streamed down his cheeks. He took the head of the dead dog in both hands and pressed his face to it. Dipping his finger into the thick blood, he daubed his forehead with it.

"Let the spirits be appeased!" he said.

Then, as custom demanded, he took the carcase by the hind legs and dragged it along. Suddenly he halted.

"No, I won't! I shall carry him my own way."

And he lifted the carcase onto his back, holding it by the front paws so that from behind it looked as if the dog were embracing his master.

As luck would have it Korauge appeared on his path. But Vaamcho strode past him in silence.

"The wretch! Always doing things his own way. Why should he carry the dog on his back?" Korauge grumbled to himself.

Vaamcho laid the dead dog outside his yarang, turning the head toward the sunrise. The hind legs were stretched out and the fluffy tail rested between them.

CHAPTER XVIII

The crackle of rifle shots echoed from the direction of the ice fields. The Enmakai hunters were out shooting seals in the unfrozen patches of water. At every shot the people in the settlement rejoiced. The more shots, the more meat there would be in Enmakai.

Two seals with bullets through their bloodstained skulls lay beside Vaamcho. Vaamcho was well pleased with the hunting today. Sitting on an ice floe, he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and was about to sit back and enjoy another long smoke when he discovered that his tobacco box was empty. Ruefully he sucked for a while on the pipe and then put it away inside his coat.

But there was little pleasure in hunting without tobacco, so presently Vaamcho rose and crawled over the broken ice to beg a pipeful from his neighbour. To his surprise he found that his neighbour was Tygrena. Still more surprised was he to see the carcases of three seals beside her.

"Kakomei, Tygrena!" Vaamcho cried in genuine admiration. "Three seals! You are indeed a great hunter."

"I missed the fourth one," she said in confusion.

Vaamcho sat down on a frozen carcase.

"Got any tobacco?"

"Of course," replied Tygrena handing him a tobacco pouch made of embroidered reindeer skin. They both lit up.

"It is a fine day, Vaamcho."

"Yes. But it is time to go home now. I wanted to get another seal but I see I shall have to help you haul yours home now."

"Perhaps you had better. They are rather big, aren't they! I wanted to take home two at a time, and come back again. That's why I was waiting for a fourth."

"It's too far, Tygrena. You would not do it in time. I'll take the three at once and you can haul my two."

"You are kind, Vaamcho. I would be willing to be your wife."

Vaamcho flushed with embarrassment and in a desperate effort to change conversation, said:

"Korauge says the seals do not like

me. He says they do not dare look me in the eye. But the two seals I killed stared straight at me and now they are lying dead beside my rifle."

"Oh, Korauge is a wicked old man!" exclaimed Tygrena. "He does not speak the truth. To listen to a man who lies is like drinking warm water. Why even I like to look at you!"

"Are you a seal then?"

Tygrena laughed. "No, I am not a seal," she paused and then went on softly:

"Korauge has been saying that the spirits do not like Vaal's yarang: Ilineut froze to death and Vaamcho was carried out to sea. He wanted Vaal to move to another settlement."

"And I didn't get carried out to sea after all!" Vaamcho said gaily. Then remembering Chegyt his face darkened.

"Each time I think of Chegyt my heart fills with wrath. I often dream about him. I see him wagging his tail and talking to me with his eyes. I would rather have lost an eye than part with him. With one eye I could still hunt. Why did Korauge insist that Chegyt be sacrificed and not some other dog? That is what I cannot understand."

"He is an evil shaman. When he turns his eyes upon me I tremble," Tygrena whispered, glancing fearfully over her shoulder.

Having smoked their fill they set out for home.

Vaamcho led the way over the pack ice, hauling Tygrena's three seals and she followed with his two. For a long time they plodded on in silence. Hoarfrost formed on Vaamcho's head and steam rose from it.

When they came within sight of the yarangs, the two hunters sat down on the carcases to rest and smoke.

"There are the yarangs, Vaamcho," said Tygrena. "My feet do not wish to take me thither."

"Alitet is bad."

Tygrena nodded.

"Vaal, my father, says that Alitet is cunning and greedy. He steals foxes from other men's traps. And my own reason tells me that he is bad. I always try to avoid him whenever I can."

"Your reason is like mine as one seal is like another. I never knew what false people were and now I am becoming false myself. Vaamcho, you take my third seal and I shall say I killed only two."

"What hunter am I to let a woman kill my seals for me? No, I cannot take it. Korauge would detect the lie. And it will go ill with you."

"I do not care. I think I shall lose control of myself one day and cut Korauge's throat. And you, Vaamcho, must shoot Alitet. Wait for him at the trap. Catch a silver fox and put it in your trap. Alitet will try to steal it and then you can shoot him."

Vaamcho paled. No one had ever spoken to him of such things.

"Tygrena, I am afraid of you."

"Do not be afraid, Vaamcho. No one can hear us here. The wind blows from the beach and we shall only talk of such things here out among the ice. No one can read our thoughts. Vaal is a good man, but do not tell him, for he will be afraid of the shaman."

"I shall tell no one. I shall keep the secret to myself. I shall nurse it with my wrath."

"Alitet is a thief. He steals everything. Me too he stole as he steals foxes from other hunters' traps. Narginaut told me that he even killed his own son and daughter to drive the sickness out of his vile body. I shall never become a real woman in his yarang."

Tygrena sighed.

"Vaamcho," she went on after a while, "I often wonder why is it that men may choose nevtums and not women?"

"That is the law, Tygrena."

"It is an unjust law. And it is weakening our people. Why must I remain childless?"

"Yes, it must be hard to remain childless."

Tygrena sat silent, lost in thought. Vaamcho puffed reflectively on his pipe.

"If I had the choice you would be my nevtum," Tygrena said. Vaamcho flushed again and turned aside to blow out a cloud of tobacco smoke. Tygrena laughed.

"Why are you like that, Vaamcho? As timid as a seal?"

"Because I am poor, perhaps."

They were both silent for a while.

"Vaamcho," Tygrena said suddenly, "I must become a real woman. I want a child."

The first thing Tygrena heard when she returned home was Alitet's voice. He was conversing with some friend.

"A guest," Tygrena said to herself as she laid the seal carcases down in the anteroom.

In her childhood the arrival of a guest was always an occasion for rejoicing, but now she was indifferent to the event. She did not even wish to see who it was.

She stood hesitating in the outer room, wiping her perspiring face with her sleeve. The pleasure she had felt at having spent a successful day hunting amid the freedom of the ice fields vanished. She wanted to smoke but discovered that she had left her tobacco pouch with Vaamcho. She slipped softly outside and ran over to old Vaal's yarang.

Nearly all the hunters were assembled there. They were drinking tea and old Vaal, half reclining on the skins, was telling them a story. How good it was here! Tygrena sat down and lit her pipe.

The hunters finished their tea and begged Vaal for another story.

"All right. Fill me a pipe and I shall tell you a story," Vaal agreed.

The hunters quickly filled their pipes and all offered them to the old man.

"Why, so many?" he smiled. "I want only one."

Puffing contentedly, he began with great dignity:

"I shall tell you about the beginning of the creation of life on earth. There was a time when it was quite dark. Where the sun was, sat the Maker, wondering how to create the earth. He thought and thought, then he created a crow and said:

" 'Go and peck at the sky until the Dawn breaks through.'

"The crow flew to the East and pecked and pecked. After a while he flew back to the Maker and said: 'I cannot break through.'

"The Maker grew wrathful, seized him and threw him aside.

" 'I do not need lazy creatures like you. Go! I shall not feed you. Forage for yourself.'

"The Maker created a bird. The bird flew to the East and began to peck at the sky with its beak. It laboured so hard that it tore its beak but only managed to make a tiny hole. It flew back.

" 'What did you do?' asked the Maker.

" 'I made a small hole.'

" 'Go and make a big one.'

"The bird flew back and started pecking again at the sky with its beak. The beak was broken, its body shrivelled up and nearly all its feathers were gone. But the job was done. The Dawn burst through and there was light. The bird had no strength left to fly, so it walked back to the Maker. On the road there was no food. The flesh dried on the poor bird's bones and it grew smaller yet. But it reached the Maker.

"'I have done as you bade me. It is now light on earth,' said the bird.

"'Good!' said the Creator, overjoyed. And he clothed the bird in fine feathers, mended its beak and gave it a home under a hummock.

"'Live,' he said, 'and multiply.'"

Tygrena glanced at Vaamcho who smiled back at her.

"Then the Maker threw seal bones down on earth and said: 'Be people!'" Vaal went on, "After a time the Maker created a white partridge and sent it down to earth to see how the people were faring. The partridge flew about for a while and then returned to the Maker.

"'It is too far, I cannot reach it.'

"The Creator seized the partridge by the tail and threw it into the brush.

"'Live in the tundra. I shall not feed you. You can forage for yourself.'

"Who was he to send as his messenger to earth?

"He made an owl.

"The owl set off and reached the earth. With its large eyes it saw from a distance four people: two men and two women. They were standing on the earth because they were afraid to sit down. The owl did not return.

"'How can I find out what is happening on earth?' the Maker wondered. He made a fox.

"'You go,' he said.

"The fox set out, but could not reach the earth. But it was cunning and so when it returned it tried to deceive the Maker.

"'There is no land and no people. All is emptiness.'

"The Maker seized the fox and threw it aside.

"'I do not need deceivers! I know that there are people. You will live in the tundra and keep out of my sight or I'll have your hide!'

"He sent many beasts on earth, the white fox and the wolf among them. But none of them brought back any tidings.

"At last the Maker went down to earth

himself. He met a man, took him by the shoulder and set him down, and placed a woman beside him.

"And so they multiplied and became a people. Out of the bushes the Maker created a reindeer. 'Here is food for you. Kill them and live.'

"And that," said Vaal, "is all."

CHAPTER XIX

It always made Tygrena sad to leave old Vaal's yarang. Among the warm-hearted, honest people who gathered there she forgot the hateful, oppressive life in Alitet's yarang. Sometimes ugly thoughts beset her. She thought of Aye far away in Yanrakenot. No doubt he had taken himself a wife by now, for there were plenty of girls who would be glad to have him. Only the thought of Vaamcho whom she now met quite often in the ice fields cheered her slightly.

Her spirits sank as she neared Alitet's yarang. A gloomy foreboding made her reluctant to enter.

Silently she slipped into the inner room and saw old Echavto, the reindeer breeder.

"Tygrena! It is you!" the old man's voice greeted her.

"Yes, it is I," replied Tygrena and silently began to take off her fur clothes.

She sat down close to the stove and started drinking the hot tea in big gulps.

Old Echavto, Alitet's new wife partner, sat between his nevtum and Korauge, the witch doctor. Here, firewater had once more sealed the pact of friendship with the rich reindeer breeder.

Alitet, well satisfied with his business affairs, was in fine humour. Like the other two men, he sat naked in the hot room with a small deerskin thrown over his knees.

The alcohol had gone to their heads, and they conversed loudly about reindeer, furs and the skins of sea animals.

"Every year your herd will grow bigger and bigger, Alitet. When the calving season comes the herd doubles," said Echavto.

"When summer comes I shall prepare a stock of walrus hide, sea lions' skins and sealskins and then I shall buy more reindeer," Alitet said.

"Right, Alitet! The nomad reindeer breeders have great need of these goods. You will get two live reindeer for every sea lion. And for every coil of walrus strap, one reindeer."

"From my friend Charlie's store I shall take more tea and iron wares and all this will go to buy reindeer. Charlie told me that reindeer are cheap, because they are born here and there are a great many of them on the Chukotsk land, but iron things, brick tea and tobacco are not born here. Every iron thing costs a great deal. One pot, one reindeer; one knife, one reindeer; one brick of tea, one reindeer. Iron needles are also not born here and so they too are costly. Our women have already forgotten how to sew with bone needles. Yes, Echavto, without iron wares it is hard for a man to live. I shall help the nomad people with these things and you help me to build up a large herd."

"Alitet, you are my friend. I have told all the nomads: Alitet has done great good to our mountain folk. They have no dogs, they are occupied with the herd, and hence they cannot go down to the coast themselves to trade. You come to the mountains and bring us the goods. You make life easier for the mountain folk," Echavto said in a tone of flattery.

Now Korauge, who had been silent throughout, spoke up:

"Your grandfather and my father possessed large herds of reindeer, Alitet. But he failed to appease the spirits, and they sent a blight on the reindeer and his herd perished. It was then that we moved down to the seacoast, to the mice eaters. I was small at the time."

"Korauge speaks the truth," said Echavto.

"Yes, yes. That is the great truth. My father was a great reindeer breeder but he died here on the seacoast a poor man, a hunter of sea animals. Now I am in communion with the spirits. They harken to me when I speak. And before I die I shall help you, Alitet, to make a large reindeer herd. And when I go there," he pointed upward, "I shall tell your grandfather that we found his lost herd."

Echavto's wrinkled face was covered with large beads of perspiration, and his long beard was damp.

"Echavto," said Alitet, "you are my best nevtum. My first wife is now like an old seal that has little fat and a sagging skin. . . But my second wife. . . ."

He chuckled and added:

"You have not seen anyone like her. . . ."

Tygrena pricked up her ears. An unpleasant shiver passed through her strong body. She stole a glance at the old man and what she saw made her want to flee from the room.

And when Alitet said that tonight Echavto would take his place, Tygrena blanched.

"No!" she said in a loud whisper.

Alitet was so surprised that he did not know what to say.

No one in his yarang had ever violated the old custom of his people. Echavto laughed sourly. So great was Alitet's wrath that he quickly threw on his clothes and went outside.

Like an old wolf Echavto slowly edged himself toward Tygrena.

"Small animals are easily scared, and so they bite back. But when they get accustomed to you they will eat out of your hand."

Now quite close to Tygrena, he laid a hard hand on her shoulder. Like a maddened vixen, Tygrena wriggled out of his grasp and gave him a push that sent him flying to the other side of the room onto the deerskin couch.

At that moment Alitet came in.

"The little vixen bites!" said Echavto with an acid smile, "Like the wild young females of the herd that refuse to be bridled."

Alitet went over to Tygrena and kicked her savagely. Her eyes blazing with anger, she crouched in a far corner of the room, grinding her teeth and gazing in bitter hatred at Alitet.

CHAPTER XX

That night Tygrena lay awake in the stuffy darkness remembering her childhood in Yanrakenot, her father Kamenvat, her grossly wronged betrothed Aye, and Vaamcho. Burying her face in the deerskin she wept with bitter tears. Presently she turned over on her back and holding her breath, listened intently in the darkness.

The men slept heavily after their drinking bout. Tygrena felt for her boots and her fur clothing and slipped noiselessly to the outer room. Then remembering something, she crept back into the room and returned with a knife.

She had made up her mind to go back to Yanrakenot, to her father Kamenvat. Once outside, she ran swiftly down the hillside. For a long time she ran on without turning round until she had to stop to catch her breath. By then she had reached the neighbouring mountain by the bay and was panting from exertion. The night was on the wane, and the moon seemed to have slid off the heavenly roof onto the ice fields. Dark heavy clouds crept up and an orange ring formed around the moon—the sign of an approaching blizzard.

It was the month of the Stubborn Old Bull and the month of the Freezing Udder was approaching. Tygrena glanced around her.

"It will be a heavy snowstorm," she thought. "But I shall not go back, no matter what happens," and she pushed forward. Now and again she paused to rest and then ran on again. She had already run quite a long distance. The mountain of Enmakai would no longer be visible even if it were light enough to see it. But strangely enough she felt no weariness. Her heart beat fast, but not so much from the swift movement as from danger, and perhaps from joy.

For a long time she had been careful to keep close to the seashore, but after a while she had strayed from the trail. She had gone quite a distance into the tundra before she suddenly noticed that all the familiar landmarks had disappeared. She had lost her way. Changing her course she ran swiftly toward the sea. Just then a hare leapt out of the brush, giving her a fright. But the hare stopped, glanced at Tygrena, turned aside and leapt on faster.

"Let us run together, hare!" She shouted to drive away her fear, and indeed the sound of her own voice in the wilderness cheered her: for she was beginning to feel frightened all alone there in that part of the coast she no longer recognized. She climbed up onto a tall hummock and surveyed the landscape. The mountains stretched in a long chain into the distance. Only their dim contours could be discerned in the gloom. But Tygrena's sharp eyes saw something that made her heart leap with joy.

"Why, that is Walrus Head Mountain. The one my father showed me when he took me as a child on a visit to the reindeer breeders."

Reassured now as to her whereabouts, Tygrena ran down the stony hillside to the seacoast. It was then she realized

that she had forgotten to take a pipe and tobacco with her. That was even more unpleasant than the snowstorm which had already started. The wind skimmed the ground, the sky blackened and the stars disappeared from view.

"It is dangerous to walk in a snowstorm. Crouch in one place and wait for it to blow over," she recalled the counsel of the experienced hunters: "A snowstorm is not dangerous to one who does not fear it."

She looked around quickly for a convenient spot where she could sit out the storm. And barely had she dug herself a shelter and crouched within than the blizzard broke out in all its fury. The snow was swept into the air and sent whirling madly by the howling wind.

Tygrena crouched in her shelter. With her sleeves tightly fastened and her head covered with her hood she felt quite warm.

The storm did not last long. In two days the sky cleared and the stars shone out again and Tygrena was able to crawl out of her lair. Her limbs were stiff and numb, and the pangs of hunger and thirst assailed her.

She knew where the hunters set their traps for foxes and decided to look for them and eat the bait. But all she could find was one old abandoned trap. It was rusty with age and the bait was gone. At last, after a long search, she saw in the distance a white fox whirling about in one place. When she drew closer she saw that the fox was trying to tear its paw loose from a trap. Beside it lay a large piece of seal meat. The frightened animal had not even touched it. Evidently it had been caught for some time, for the bone of its leg was broken and it was hanging on by the skin alone.

Tygrena strangled the beast, set the trap again and laid the killed fox beside it. The meat of the bait was frozen so hard that her knife could not cut it. With great difficulty Tygrena managed to hack off a few pieces which she swallowed hungrily.

She wanted to slake her thirst with the warm blood of the fox but she did not dare to spoil the skin.

CHAPTER XXI

It was an unusual day in Yanrakenot. In all the yarangs the talk was about Kamenvat's wife. She had "given her word" and was preparing to go to join the "people on high."

For many days she had been ill. Her arms and legs were swollen. Her face expressed extreme apathy. Some evil spirit had taken up its abode in Kamenvat's yarang and life had become well nigh unendurable.

The neighbours, fearing the evil spirits, shunned the old folk. Aye alone sometimes approached and laid a piece of meat and some fat in the antechamber. Kamenvat himself did not dare to leave the yarang, fearing to draw evil upon his own kind.

The sick old woman knew well how much grief and suffering she was causing her kinsfolk.

"Why burden their lives needlessly? There is such a thing as an honorable voluntary death," she thought.

And all the people of the settlement were agreed that the old woman had perhaps better join the "people on high" of her own free will. And so they all waited for her to ask for death herself. But everyone is the master of his own life.

The old woman hesitated to say the final word that would quickly release her from life on earth: she wanted to see Tygrena once before she died.

One morning as Kamenvat was lighting the stove he heard the old woman's feeble voice.

"Kamenvat," she said, "I must depart. The time has come. I can wait no longer. Yesterday in my thoughts I gave my word and now I say it with my tongue."

"Perhaps you will tarry a while yet? Perhaps the evil spirits will leave our yarang. Must you leave me all alone?" Kamenvat said gently.

But he knew himself that the old woman was saying only that which they had all been awaiting for some time.

"No," she replied, "I thought much about it yesterday. And this night I did not sleep preparing myself to say the 'word.' Now I say it again. It is time for me to depart to the people on high."

Kamenvat decided to send for Tygrena. Alitet too must be present to help the old woman make her departure.

While they were talking of the coming event they heard someone enter the yarang. A cough warned them of the stranger's presence. It had been so long

since anyone had come to them that Kamenvat had ceased to recognize his neighbours by their footsteps and coughs. It must be Aye with another piece of meat.

"Aye, is it you?"

"No, it is not Aye. It is I, Tygrena."

"What do my ears hear? Is it an evil spirit that has come to torment me?" Kamenvat whispered to the old woman. "Tell me, did you too hear her voice?"

"Yes, I heard it. Perhaps Tygrena's heart told her that my 'great day' has come."

Kamenvat lifted the end of the curtain and peered into the outer room.

"Tygrena!" he cried.

"Yes, it is I," she said wearily.

She entered the room, but recoiled in horror when she saw the changed appearance of her mother. She had heard that her mother was ill but she had never thought to find her thus.

A heavy silence reigned in the room. Its occupants were unhappy, each in his own way. And none of them dared to speak first.

At last the mother broke the silence.

"So you have come, Tygrena. You have done well. Today is my 'great day.' Lay out the new skin for Alitet."

Tygrena shook her head in silence.

"Alitet is not here. We do not want him. He is in Enmakai... I have run away from him."

Kamenvat stared at Tygrena in amazement.

"What is this I hear? Has Kele entered my ears? Tygrena, what have you done!" There was despair in the old man's voice. "None of our people has ever done this before. The evil spirits must have lured you into this foolish venture. You must return at once."

"No, Kamenvat, I shall not return. Even a mouse has a heart, and a mouse too can be angry."

"Woe is me! What have I done to deserve so much ill fortune!" wailed the old man.

The old woman was already past caring about earthly matters. She thought only of the word she had given that morning.

"People, make haste. My time is approaching. Prepare quickly or it may be too late," said the old woman in agitation.

And at once the preparations for the "last tea" began. There was enough walrus hide in the house, but the reindeer skin which had to be wrapped around the old woman's neck was lacking. And, what was most important, there was wanting one more kinsman to attend the ceremony.

Tygrena hung the kettle over the stove and went outside.

As she stood in the outer doorway she saw people passing down the street. They greeted her from afar but no one dared to come close to Kamenvat's yarang.

In the distance Aye appeared. He too noticed Tygrena and deliberately slowed his pace.

"Oh, Kakomei, Tygrena!" he said with emotion as he came closer.

"Aye, it is death day in our yarang. And we have no kinsman whose voice my mother might hear for the last time. You alone still live in my heart."

"Very well, Tygrena, she shall hear my voice," Aye agreed quickly.

"We have no reindeer skin."

"I shall run and get one. I still have two...."

"Wait... There is trouble in our yarang."

Aye looked puzzled. "Have our people ceased to consider it a great happiness when someone hastens to join the people on high?" he asked.

"Trouble for Kamenvat, I mean," said Tygrena.

"My brains must have dried up in my head," said Aye, bewildered. "I do not understand what you say."

"Last night I ran away from Alitet," whispered Tygrena.

The whole settlement was petrified with amazement at this piece of news.

In every yarang, in every room Tygrena was the sole topic of conversation, and it was felt that her action was an ill omen. The news of her flight eclipsed the importance of as rare an event as the voluntary death of her mother.

When all the preparations were completed the "last tea" was served. Four persons were present: the old woman, Kamenvat, Tygrena and Aye. They sat in a semicircle and Tygrena poured the tea. It was not tea, but a herb from the distant tundra that used to be brewed in water before the white traders came to these shores. It was drunk without sugar. The farewell day had to be such as it had been long ago when no white man had set foot on Chukotsk land.

The old woman sat up dressed in a new fur cloak and new boots of fur. The cloth-

ing had been made long in advance. All the others were dressed in their ordinary garb.

They drank in complete silence. At last the old woman handed her cup to Tygrena and said: "Enough, people. Tygrena, take my cup. You will drink tea for a long while yet."

The dishes were quickly cleared away, and the old woman was moved to the middle of the room.

Her face expressed utter indifference to her surroundings. It was as though she had already set out on her journey, leaving forever behind her the hard life on earth. She looked at her kinsfolk but did not appear to see them. And they heard her voice no more. She rolled over on the reindeer skin and closed her eyes.

Tygrena, weeping, wrapped the strip of doeskin around her mother's neck, Kamenvat tied a noose on top and Aye, seated astride the old woman's knees, took hold firmly of her arms, and pinned them down to the floor. The noose tightened.

Outside the yarang the dogs began to howl one after the other until the whole settlement echoed with the mournful sound.

They carried the corpse to the mountains and laid it among the rocks. Kamenvat tore the clothing apart so that the beasts and birds of prey should be able to devour the corpse easily. Beside it Tygrena laid a cup and saucer, a needle and some thread made of reindeer guts.

Just as the ceremony ended, a dog sled appeared on the slope of the hill. It was Alitet coming after Tygrena.

CHAPTER XXII

Far removed from any cultural centre, the Chukotsk Peninsula had been cut off from civilization for centuries. Unwritten laws governed the lives of its inhabitants. Superstition was man's constant companion from the cradle to the grave. But for all that, the chief features of this people were boldness and valour.

In the middle of the 17th century the desire for new discoveries brought to these shores a simple Russian Cossack named Semyon Dezhnev. Long before Vitus Bering came this way, Semyon Dezhnev on his boat had sailed around the northeastern extremity of the Asiatic mainland.

Since that time for more than a century Russian Cossacks had forced the unruly Chukotsk people to pay homage to the Russian tsar.

Yet it was neither firearms, nor the sword that conquered the people. They were vanquished by Russian tobacco, steel knives, axes, sugar, spirits and other goods shipped in by Russian merchants from Yakutsk.

At the end of the 19th century, with the opening of a regular steamer service from Vladivostok, came the first Russian governor of Anadyr province, Dr. Grinevitsky.

After making the acquaintance of the local inhabitants, he asked his superiors for permission to relinquish the title of governor and be known only as a doctor since, in his opinion, the Chukchi were a free people as yet unaccustomed to the idea of authority.

In 1867, the tsarist government had sold Alaska, which had been discovered and explored by the Russians, to the United States.

From that time American whalers had begun to arrive on the Chukotsk Peninsula by the dozen, trading on both sides of the Bering Strait.

"Take the whales but leave us the walruses. We must have something to hunt ourselves," the Chukchi said to the whalers. "Since you want only the tusks of the walrus, and throw the carcases into the sea, it is better that we give you the tusks ourselves."

Close on the heels of the whalers came the smugglers' schooners buying up rich furs for a song.

Representatives of Russian and foreign capital settled on the coast on the lookout for furs: besides the Russian merchants, came Danes, Norwegians, Americans and Englishmen. Gain and not the advancement of the natives was the aim of the strangers who had come to these shores.

Such also was the reason why Mr. Thompson lingered on the Chukotsk Peninsula. For the past four years, beginning with 1917 he had carefully followed all the reports in the American press about the Russian revolution. But he was unable to understand its significance.

The unusual behaviour of Aye during the sale of the silver foxes and the advent on the coast of some Russian partisan had put him on the alert.

It was the year 1923. The spring was unusually lovely. The air was clear and pure and the muffled roar of the ocean

far away was the only sound disturbing the great silence.

Here and there in the heart of the tundra the snow was beginning to melt, and although most of the earth was still ice-bound the Arctic sparrows had already arrived. Flying about in search of food over the white-clad tundra now warmed by the sun, they seemed to be calling to one another, their shrill chirping a welcome sign of life in the ice-clad wilderness.

It seemed that these harbingers of the Arctic summer had arrived too soon. Yet they managed to find food in the brush, in the valleys of the rivers and in the last year's reindeer tracks. Hastily they built their nests so as to hatch their brood and fly off with them as soon as they were able to flap their wings.

After the long winter's sleep the yevrazhki[1] too awakened. These lively little animals crawled out of their burrows and warmed themselves in the spring sunshine, running cautiously from burrow to burrow, and darting swiftly away below ground at the slightest hint of danger.

The air shimmered, so that objects were distorted and from a distance the yevrazhki, to the inexperienced eye, looked like running humans.

The snow, moist and dazzlingly white, still lay thick on everything and the sun did not dip below the horizon.

As his alarm clock went off with a loud buzz, Mr. Thompson rolled over in his bed, hid his head under the pillow and kept it there until the ringing ceased. A moment later, however, the alarm went off with renewed force and again Mr. Thompson had recourse to the pillows. Six times with brief intervals the alarm clock persevered in its efforts to wake its owner.

That was a truly remarkable alarm clock. Mr. Thompson was inordinately proud of it. He played with it as if it were alive, hiding from it under the pillow and popping out again. And thus he finally shook off sleep.

It was 10 o'clock in the morning. Mr. Thompson had risen at this hour every morning since 1901 when he had first arrived in this country.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, his feet resting on the bearskin rug, Mr. Thompson looked around him. It was dark in the room except for a single ray of light that came through a tiny hole in the woollen blind. In the darkness it looked like a shining piece of thread stretched from the upper part of the window to the rocking chair that stood against the opposite wall.

But the sight of this shining thread annoyed Mr. Thompson.

"Goddam these people! I've been trying to teach them for twenty years now without any success. Even a seal could learn a lot in that time," he muttered and without rising from the bed called out:

"May!"

A middle-aged woman came hurrying into the room. Accustomed to her husband's habits, Rultyna moved in the darkness, as softly and surely as a yevrazhka in its burrow. She went over to the window and was about to raise the heavy blind when her husband stopped her.

"Wait a minute! You see that hole? See how the light streams through it?"

"Yes."

"Well, why don't you do something about it? I don't want my sleep to be disturbed. You are very careless about such things."

Rultyna listened meekly to her white husband's words. She could not for the life of her understand what he wanted. Had he not seen how real people slept in the snow on dog sleds with the sunlight pouring down on them?

"Now you may open the window," said Mr. Thompson.

A blinding light poured through the small window into the low-ceilinged room, revealing a bed, a table, a home-made bookcase and two cane chairs. On a box in the corner near the rocking chair stood a gramophone with a huge horn which was played on Sundays.

On the top shelf of the bookcase were books by Jack London and the posthumous works of Wedsley. On the lower shelves lay a neat pile of American newspapers and magazines. All of the latter were a year old. They had been brought last summer by the schooner which had delivered the goods for Mr. Thompson's store and constituted his spiritual nourishment. The newspapers and magazines were piled in strict chronological order. Mr. Thomspon read them day by day as if they had just been delivered by the mail man. Each morning he would take the newspaper for that date one year back. Mr. Thompson had every opportunity

[1] A kind of marmot.

to look ahead, but he had too much self-control to permit himself to learn the news of the world prematurely. And so Mr. Thompson was exactly one year behind the civilized world.

The little house he had built himself out of packing cases might easily have been replaced by a sound building. He had but to voice the wish and the firm he dealt with would have sent out the necessary material by the next boat.

But why should he? He had no intention of living here all his life. And his humble abode was quite enough for him here. There was no sense in wasting good dollars.

Swinging himself back and forth in the rocking chair Mr. Thompson finished his morning pipe, rose heavily to his feet and went over to the hand-made calendar. He crossed out yesterday's date—May 16, 1923—and putting his pipe in the pocket of his plaid shirt went over to the bookshelf and took a newspaper for May 17, 1922.

From the small outer room where his family lived, his wife entered carrying a tray with a pot of coffee, a plate of bacon and some home-baked white bread. She placed everything on the table and silently withdrew.

With his "fresh" newspaper in his hand, Mr. Thompson drew up to the table. He did not know what news this paper would bring him from the civilized world. He was as yet unaware of what had happened exactly a year ago in the land where businessmen could not sleep in peace. . . .

True, everything he was now reading had been old news to the crew of the schooner last July. But the sailors knew that Mr. Thompson preferred to be one year behind the times. Indeed, he had forbidden them to tell him any of the last year's news. Life must flow in orderly fashion, without disturbing leaps.

With his newspaper propped up in front of him, Mr. Thompson sipped his third mug of coffee. Suddenly he banged the china mug on the table, threw down the paper and took off his glasses. With a corner of his shirt Mr. Thompson wiped the lenses carefully and put them on again.

Leaning over the table he picked up his paper and re-read the item that had startled him so much. The Soviet Government, he read, was granting the Nord Company a concession to trade with the population of Kamchatka, the Chukotsk Peninsula and Anadyr region. Anyone who could speak Russian and who could handle a motor-boat was invited to apply for work.

Nothing he had heard in all the past twenty years, not even the news of the Russian revolution, had affected him so much as this item.

"The Nord Company! Why, they're sharks. No small businessman can survive with them around!"

And puffing wildly on his pipe he thought of the Nord Company and the ruthless manner in which it had elbowed out lesser business firms from the shores of Hudson Bay.

Weary from his unwonted mental exertion, Mr. Thompson lowered his heavy frame into the rocking chair and read the offending news item again.

Then he threw the paper on the floor in disgust and leaned his red head against the back of the rocking chair.

There could be no question of leaving the place now. No, Mr. Thompson would not give up this gold mine to anyone.

"I'll fool them all. Wait and see!"

But the thought of the Nord Company sent cold shivers down his spine. He knew all the tricks of the company by heart. This mighty firm with its enormous fleet would soon grab all the customers. It would start by trading at a loss and then by all manner of financial manoeuvres would begin making money hand over fist.

"May!" yelled Mr. Thompson.

"Whisky," he ordered when his wife timidly appeared in the doorway.

Rultyna quickly brought a bottle. She was worried. Something must be wrong. Never in all their twenty years together had she known him to drink whisky in the morning. Rultyna was much disturbed by her husband's unusual behaviour. She feared that he was losing his mind.

Mr. Thompson downed the whisky. Suddenly an idea occurred to him. Alitet! He still had Alitet. And with Alitet he could do anything in these parts. Through him he could purchase all the furs in advance and the Nord Company would have nothing left to buy but eider duck eggs!

And Mr. Thompson pictured the huge steamer arriving with a cargo of goods and not a single skin to buy. Never mind if Mr. Thompson suffered a loss. That was a capital way of getting even with the great Nord Company!

CHAPTER XXIII

Mr. Thompson's wife and six children lived apart in a small Chukchi dwelling at the back of his hut. His children were half-castes and together with his wife and Yarak, his adopted son, lived like the rest of the natives, using seal fat for heat and light, sleeping on reindeer skins and eating the flesh of walruses and seals. Their keep cost Mr. Thompson very little and the white man held aloof from them, rarely intruding upon their lives.

His eldest daughter Mary was already nineteen and, according to Mr. Thompson's calculations, had long since more than paid for her keep by her sewing. Mary's mode of life differed but little from that of the other girls in Loren. She shared their interests and, like them, she spoke only Chukchi. In appearance, however, she was more European than Chukchi—tall and supple of build with a face whose fine features were offset by a pair of large dark eyes fringed with long lashes. Perhaps that is why Mr. Thompson was more attached to her than to the other children. He dressed her in the handsomest furs, and she was privileged to enter his part of the house more often than any of the others. There were times indeed when Mr. Thompson was actually proud of his daughter.

But the fact that Mary's father was a white man was a source of great sorrow both to the girl and to her mother. Mary had already grown to womanhood, and the question of marriage had often been broached between mother and daughter. Indeed such matters could only be discussed in the privacy of their own quarters, for Charlie was adamant on the subject of his daughter's marriage. This was something neither mother nor daughter could understand.

Did the white man not know that a grown girl must have a husband, a father for her children? Should every girl not strive to become a mother? Was not that what girls were born for? How could the white father and husband not understand such a simple thing?

But Mr. Thompson had his own ideas on the subject. He was fond of his lovely daughter, and he wanted her to make a good marriage. It never occurred to him that he might have a native for a son-in-law.

Of the six children who dwelt under his roof only Mary and the boy Ben were his own offspring, the rest being the children of his marriage partners. From their appearance it was obvious that there was not a drop of "white" blood in their veins.

Mr. Thompson realized that it was time for his daughter to get married. But who would be her husband? Mr. Thompson felt that there was not a man worthy of her on the entire coast. Perhaps some sailor from one of the passing steamers would take her? But a young Chukchi savage who knew no English and who had no idea of western customs would hardly be a fitting bride to take home to America.

Moreover, the moral standards of the whaleboats' and smuggler schooners' crews that visited these shores were notoriously low. They would live with native girls so long as they stayed on the coast, and then sail away and leave them behind. Mr. Thompson knew only too well how disastrously these temporary marriages ended. He remembered how many Chukchi women thus abandoned by sailors who had lived with them to pass the time while waiting for the navigation season to open, had hurled themselves off a high cliff in despair.

Mary and her mother knew of these things as well. And Mary had no desire for a white husband. Even the best white man she knew—her father, who had settled on the coast for life—did not inspire her with much admiration.

For a considerable time already Mr. Thompson had been on the lookout for some sailor whom he could persuade to marry his daughter and settle down on the coast with the eventual prospect of taking over his business. He was even prepared to marry her off to an old man so long as he was white. But in the past few years he had failed to find anyone suitable.

All Mary's girl friends in Loren and other settlements were already women and had children of their own. Mary did not yet know that happiness. And her future was still uncertain. Frustrated, the girl grew gloomy and disrespectful to her father.

"Yarak is a good, strong hunter," the mother thought. "It would be good if Mary married him. But, of course, he is not white."

Twenty years of training had taught Rultyna humble obedience, and she knew better than to voice such thoughts to her husband. She waited respectfully to hear what Charlie would say.

But Charlie sat in his den alone and no one knew what was in his mind. He was not a sociable man. His dealings with the natives were confined strictly to business. He seemed to take more interest in the papers on his shelf than in human beings. Rultyna hated those papers and whenever she cleaned or dusted the room she would strike the "silent-talking papers" angrily with her duster.

She even preferred when Charlie would eye with favour some young Chukchi woman. At such times he seemed to her more human. He who smiled so rarely would then stretch his mouth in a grin that revealed two rows of shining metal teeth. He would call the girl to his room and lock the door. And presently she would leave with a packet of chewing gum. Charlie was always very generous with these women. Sometimes he would give the woman a whole packet of bullets as a gift to her husband.

And in due time another white-faced infant would be born somewhere along the coast. But although these children stood out sharply among their half-sisters and brothers they were loved and cherished both by their parents and by everyone else in the settlement. The birth of any child was an occasion for rejoicing and no one cared whose child it was. What did it matter so long as the child grew up to be a hunter, a real man. Thus thought the Chukchi and Charlie knew this very well. He had even given a home to Yarak, the boy who had been an outcast abandoned by all.

CHAPTER XXIV

The circumstances under which Yarak came to share the white man's roof were rather unusual.

A plague had struck the coast. Some particularly evil spirit, people said, had taken up its abode in Kamenei settlement. People died before one another's eyes. They did not have the strength to move and they froze to death in unheated yarangs. Even shamans became as stiff as any other corpse.

In one yarang everyone had been carried off by the plague except the child Yarak. Terrified, he fled from his home to the neighbouring yarang. There too people lay cold and lifeless as stone. He called and called, but no one answered. Horror seized him and he ran from one yarang to another, but everywhere he met silence. The settlement was dead.

Yarak ran away from the settlement and wandered along the shore of the sea. After a while some hunters picked him up and took him to their settlement. But when they heard his story the people took fright. For the boy was the bearer of the evil spirit. They gave him a supply of food and told him to go. And wherever he went he met with the same reception.

Mr. Thompson was not afraid of evil spirits, so he took Yarak to his home. The boy grew up with Charlie's family, took care of the dogs and helped with the household tasks and when he grew to manhood became a hunter. On the whole Mr. Thompson had no reason to regret his generous impulse.

One day, however, Mr. Thompson noticed a peculiar expression on his daughter's face as she looked at Yarak. He decided to take action at once. He called Yarak to him and said:

"I saved your life, Yarak. Now you are a big, strong man. I sent you to the whale ships to work with the white men. Now you no longer need my help. Henceforth you may live among your own kind. I shall tell Rynteu that you will live with him in his yarang. When I need you for work I shall send for you."

Yarak was greatly taken aback. He had never expected Charlie to send him away. He was a good worker and Charlie was always so pleased with him. Latterly Yarak had been at special pains to please Charlie, for he hoped to marry Mary. And now just as he was about to broach the subject to Charlie he was being dismissed.

"Charlie," he stammered looking at his erstwhile benefactor in bewilderment, "I want to marry Mary. Let me build a separate yarang where we can live together."

"Madman!" screamed Charlie, "what are you talking about. Have you ever heard of a white man's daughter marrying a savage? Fool! That will never be. Take your skins this minute and get out of my house. And never let me see you around here again. That is the white man's law."

Yarak took his reindeer skins and went to Rynteu's yarang.

"What white man's law was he talking about?" Yarak wondered. "For three summers Charlie sent me to hunt whales with the white men. I learned to speak

their language and never did I hear about any such law!"

Yarak stood for a long time outside Rynteu's hut hesitating to enter. It was a shameful thing to be driven out of the yarang that had been his home for so many years. Why, people would laugh at him when they found out. Yarak could not bring himself to give the cough that would warn Rynteu of his presence. He was wondering whether he might not better kill himself when involuntarily he coughed, and Rynteu stuck his head through the curtain.

"Come in, come in Yarak!" he cried heartily.

"Rynteu, Charlie has sent me away. He says I am to live with you."

"That's fine. Live here. There's plenty of room. We'll entertain the trading folk together. It will be jolly here. You know yourself that my yarang is the news centre for the whole coast."

Old Rynteu and all his goods and chattels belonged to Mr. Thompson. For twenty years he had lived under Charlie's wing. Once upon a time he had had a large family of his own, but they had all died, all but one daughter who now ran his household for him. Rynteu's wife had been quite a favourite of Charlie's and had brought her husband many fine gifts from him. Once Charlie had actually presented Rynteu with a rifle. Rynteu was the happiest Chukchi on the coast that day. It was not everyone who received such gifts. Rynteu appreciated Charlie's generosity and was eternally grateful to him. In return he would take special pains to prepare food for the dogs of the hunters who came to trade with Charlie. He knew that hunters liked to trade where they could always be sure of finding food for their dogs. And for that reason it sometimes happened that hunters who dwelt in the neighbourhood of the merchant Bryukhanov's store would come all the way to Charlie to trade. Knowing that nothing pleased Mr. Thompson more, the grateful Rynteu hunted incessantly to keep his stocks of dog food replete.

Rynteu was used to living and working for Charlie, and the latter did not hesitate to make use of his services. And so when Yarak came to his yarang, carrying his reindeer skins, Rynteu was delighted. And indeed Yarak was a fine, stalwart youth to have around. Rynteu would not have been averse to having him for a son-in-law.

But Yarak was downcast. He replied absently to his host's questions.

"Why do you look so sad, Yarak?" asked Rynteu anxious to please his guest.

"Keep silent, Rynteu, or I shall strike you."

"Oh," said Rynteu with surprise, "very well, I shall say nothing."

CHAPTER XXV

Mr. Thompson was so engrossed with his plan for fighting the Nord Company that he forgot to take his customary morning walk—twice from his house to the shore and back. For years he had taken this constitutional immediately after his morning cup of coffee until it had become second nature to him, but this time he had not shown himself outside, although it was already noon.

His wife, worried about Charlie's state of mind, came in.

"Charlie, a great many people have already come to trade," she said in a low voice.

Mr. Thompson stared out of the window in silence. Then he spun round.

"Serve the arrivals tea in Rynteu's yarang," he ordered. "Give them some biscuits too, but not too many, just enough to get them interested. The way you bait traps with only enough meat to lure an animal."

Mr. Thompson dressed and walked out of the room.

As he was passing the family's quarters his eye caught a pair of man's fur-booted legs protruding from beneath the curtain. Mr. Thompson stopped and kicked the boots.

"Who's this?" he demanded sternly.

The curtain moved aside and the smiling face of Yarak appeared.

Mr. Thompson saw red.

"You goddam son of a bitch! Didn't I tell you to keep away from this place!"

Mr. Thompson's eyes were nearly popping out, his red nose turned blue and he frothed at the mouth.

His self-control gone, Mr. Thompson seized Yarak by the foot and dragged him outside.

"Now get out!" he yelled, gnashing his metal teeth.

Yarak rose slowly to his feet, and smiling bitterly walked away, his heart smouldering with resentment.

Mr. Thompson turned round and saw

his daughter staring at him through the parted curtain, her eyes blazing like the eyes of an enraged wolverine. But before he could say anything she had disappeared, savagely pulling down the curtain.

Breathing heavily, Mr. Thompson returned to his own room and collapsed in his rocking chair. He felt emotionally spent. He already regretted his sudden loss of self-control.

"Stupid of me to fly off the handle like that," he thought as he filled his pipe. "This is no time to arouse the hostility of the natives!"

Cursing himself for a fool, Mr. Thompson resolved to make amends as quickly as possible.

He called Mary. But no one answered.

"Ben!" he shouted. A small boy dressed in finely matched skins came running into the room.

Ben loved his father's room, and it was always a great treat for him when he was allowed to be there. He stood on the threshold waiting respectfully for his father to speak.

"Come here, my boy!"

Ben went over and stood beside the rocking chair. Mr. Thompson laid his large hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Has Mary gone out, Ben?" he inquired gently.

"No, she is in the room."

"Why did she not come when I called?"

The boy shook his head. "She doesn't want to."

There was a pause. Mr. Thompson pondered the situation. Never before had his orders been ignored. He sighed. Perhaps she was right, after all.

"Ben," he said, "hand me that photograph album."

With one arm around his son, Mr. Thompson turned the pages of the album until he came to a photograph of himself taken in his childhood in Norway. He examined it at length.

"Look, Ben," he said. "It might be your own portrait."

The boy studied the photograph with interest, then glanced up at himself in the mirror and smiled. The likeness was indeed remarkable.

"Would you like to go to America, Ben, to go away for always?"

"Oh, no!" Ben replied without hesitation, shaking his head vigorously.

CHAPTER XXVI

The hunters crowded around Charlie's store waiting impatiently for the trading to begin. The usual opening time had long since passed, but Charlie still failed to put in an appearance. What was the matter with him? The more curious had already tried to peer through his curtained window. It was obvious by all the signs that Charlie had been up for a long while. But for some reason he had not gone out for his daily walk down to the beach. What could it mean? Had he been taken ill?

Unwilling to dampen the spirits of the hunters, Yarak said nothing about the morning's unpleasant happenings. He had given Rynteu strict instructions not to tell anyone that Charlie had sent him away, for he was ashamed to let anyone know of his humiliation. He must first try to understand the white man's law himself.

He mingled with the crowd of hunters and, concealing the sense of injury that burned within him, took a lively part in the talk about hunting foxes and seals. He heard and imparted titbits of news, and watched team drivers exchanging dogs.

Over on one side the younger men started wrestling matches. A light steam rose from their bodies, which were naked to the waist.

Out of the crowd stepped a powerfully built lad. Throwing off his fur robe he rubbed his hands and began pacing up and down, waiting for someone to challenge him. But when no one appeared to show any interest the lad began to lose his temper.

"Well?" he said in a loud, arrogant tone. "Aren't there any strong men left around here? There ought to be at least one in a crowd like this."

Yarak, who was in just the mood for a fight, decided to teach the conceited young pup a lesson.

He tore off his robe, and stepped into the open space.

"Here's one, for instance."

"Take that white man's cloth shirt off. It will be in the way."

Yarak removed the shirt and advanced slowly toward his opponent.

The crowd made a ring around the wrestlers, the small boys elbowing their way vigorously to the front to get a better view.

For a long time the wrestlers circled one

another as if taking each other's measure. Suddenly Yarak struck his opponent in the neck with the palm of his hand with a smack that sounded like an oar hitting water. At the same time, the other seized Yarak's leg below the knee and the two went crashing down, rolling over and over in a confused tangle of arms and legs. This lasted only for a moment, however, and the young men were once more on their feet.

At the height of the struggle Charlie's voice was heard.

"Hallo there!" he shouted. "A box of tobacco for the strongest!" He did not recognize Yarak as one of the two figures rolling in the snow.

Suddenly amid the wild cheers of the crowd, Yarak lifted his opponent into the air and threw him down onto the snow. The other leapt to his feet again only to be laid out on his back the next moment.

Yarak sat triumphantly astride his defeated opponent, while the latter waited patiently for the victor to release him. It was only then that Mr. Thompson recognized Yarak.

Relieved at this opportunity of patching up his relations with Yarak, Mr. Thompson fetched a two-pound box of fragrant plug tobacco and solemnly presented it to the victor.

Yarak took it and looking at Charlie, did not know what to say. Only a short time before, Charlie had spoken to him angrily and dragged him by the leg like a dead dog. Now he was jolly, and had given him a whole case of tobacco. No, even he, Yarak, couldn't understand these white people and their laws.

"We shall trade later on," said Thompson gaily. "First let us drink tea."

Charlie's unusually good humour spread to the hunters. They had already had tea in Rynteu's yarang, but who could decline a cup of tea when Charlie himself offered it? None! Not if he was filled with water to his throat.

"Mary, tea for the guests!" Thompson shouted.

The hearty welcome he was giving the hunters pleased Mary and her mother very much, and they soon carried in the tea-things and teapot containing a hot, strong brew.

The hunters sat in a semicircle, chewing soda biscuits, loudly sipping their tea and carrying on an animated conversation.

"Let's have some more kav-kav! More kav-kav!" shouted Charlie, calling for more biscuits.

"Charlie's a good man," someone observed.

"Very good!" another responded.

One box of biscuits was eaten up in no time and Charlie called for another one.

Thompson's wife and daughter were overjoyed to serve the arrivals. And who does not enjoy feeding people properly, so that they have to loosen their belts?

Everything went well, only Rultyna was now absolutely convinced that her white husband had had dealings with evil spirits during the night, for what else could have so upset his mental balance? When in full possession of his faculties, Thompson had always scolded her for every extra piece of sugar, every extra soda biscuit eaten by the family. Yes, she knew very well what it all signified.

"Your belly's made to be filled with all kinds of junk and is not good enough for biscuits," Charlie had told her more than once, and it was impossible to understand what was making him act the way he did now.

After the tea drinking, bartering began. Vaamcho was the first to go over to Mr. Thompson.

"Charlie, I've got a polar bear skin in my sled," he said. "It's a big skin. Shall I bring it here?"

"No, better not. Let's take a look at it outside, it's crowded and dark here anyway."

The crowd of hunters emptied out into the open air, and some of them eagerly helped Vaamcho unpack the enormous bearskin. When it was spread out, everyone agreed that the skin was an extra fine one.

Mr. Thompson rubbed his glasses and crawled on all fours over the splendid skin. In many places he paused and tugged at the pile, but it held firm. There was not a single blemish on the skin. The pile was even and snowy white. Mr. Thompson measured it from head to tail and it was 14 feet long. He ordered it to be rolled up and went over to his store.

At that moment a dog sled appeared on the hillside. By the speed at which it was moving everyone at once recognized it for Alitet's team. Mr. Thompson stopped in his tracks. He was more interested in Alitet at this juncture than in Vaamcho's bearskin.

With a loud barking Alitet's team came

dashing along at full speed. In front of Charlie's house his dogs collided with a team left there by some hunter from a distant settlement. There was an incredible squealing of dogs. Fangs flashed and fur flew, and in one second one of the hunter's small dogs was torn to pieces. With their tails between their legs, the other dogs were snarling and whining. The owner of the sled rushed into the fray, defending his dogs.

Eight men succeeded with difficulty in dragging away Alitet's savage dogs.

The hunter stooped over the victim to examine its injuries, and when he saw that it was dead, he went over to Alitet.

"Why did you loose your dogs on my team?"

"Why did you put them in my way? That's not the place to leave your team. Next time you will know!" Alitet replied with his customary arrogance.

"Yes, I daresay I shall," replied the hunter.

Noticing Mr. Thompson Alitet turned away and swaggered over to him, swinging his brake pole. He took off his fishskin mitten and shook hands with Charlie.

"Regular wolves those dogs of yours," remarked Mr. Thompson.

"Yes, they are pretty strong," Alitet replied.

"Come inside, Alitet. I have something important to tell you."

Alitet turned to Tygrena who was sitting on his sled and called to her to come in.

"Never mind the woman," said Charlie. "Don't you know that when men talk business there should be no women around?"

"Ah, but Charlie this is my second wife, the one you asked about. That is why I brought her with me."

"Not now, not now!" Mr. Thompson said irritably. "Let her stay outside."

"Charlie, I don't want her to meet Aye," Alitet whispered. "She was promised to him and I heard that he has come here from the mountains. You know yourself how foolish women are. She will go away and then I shall have to search for her as you search for a dog that has broken loose."

"Don't worry. Aye has not been paid for his skin yet. He is bound to wait until he gets his goods."

Tygrena approached. She halted a few paces away from the men, staring at Charlie whom she had never seen before.

Charlie gazed at her in admiration. "That's a very fine-looking girl you've got there, Alitet!" he said in English, and patted Tygrena on the shoulder.

Charlie's speech sounded to Tygrena so much like the grunting of a seal that she burst out laughing, and hid her face in the sleeve of her handsome fur robe.

Mr. Thompson threw an arm about her waist and drew her to him, laughing loudly.

"You amuse yourself here for a while, Tygrena. Alitet and I have some business to discuss right now."

And pulling Alitet by the belt he led the way to his house.

"Our women like white men," Alitet said slily.

"Oh, yes. I know that."

They entered the room, and Mr. Thompson hurriedly closed the door.

"Alitet," he said, throwing off his jacket, "I have a big piece of business to offer you. Sit down right here. Would you like some firewater?"

"Very much. I have not seen any for a long time. I have almost forgotten its smell."

He poured out two glasses of whisky, and they drank it down at once.

"That was fine," said Alitet stroking his belly. "Give me some more."

"Not now," said Mr. Thompson sternly. "When night comes we shall drink some more, but now we have business to discuss and you know yourself that when you have important things to discuss you must keep your brain clear. I have some big news for you."

Alitet wiped the inside of the mug with his fingers and licked them off.

It was hot in the room, and Alitet untied his belt and removed his fur robe. Mr. Thompson looked at the dark body and the thought flashed through his mind: "There sits your partner in marriage." And for some reason the sight of Alitet's sweaty body disgusted him. He rose, took a plaid shirt off the hook and handed it to him:

"Put this on, Alitet. I can't let an old friend of mine go about without a shirt."

Charlie's behaviour struck Alitet as odd, but the white man had to be humoured and so he donned the shirt. He felt extremely uncomfortable. The garment restricted his movements and the cloth tickled his skin unpleasantly. It could not be compared with a shirt of soft fluffy deer-

skin. But Charlie was the master here and he must have his way.

Mr. Thomposon, who had been studying Alitet's face, suddenly fired a question at him:

"Alitet, who made a great trader out of you?"

Alitet pondered the question for a few moments before answering rather uncertainly:

"You."

"Yes. Now, don't worry—I do not wish to deceive you. I only want you to be a rich man. You are my old friend, are you not?"

Alitet sighed with relief. "Oh yes, Charlie. You speak truly."

"But what is most important, Alitet, you and I are business friends, friends in the fur-buying business. Now, I shall not take those two hundred and twenty-five foxes lying in your sled. You can carry them back home."

Alitet, horrified, half rose in his chair.

"No. No. Don't get scared," Mr. Thompson reassured him. "I want you to trade with the white captain yourself this summer when the schooner comes. You will receive a great deal of goods from such trade."

Alitet could not understand what Charlie was driving at.

"Charlie," he said, "none of the foxes on my sled are paid for. I have travelled all over the tundra collecting them from the hunters, and not one of them has received any tobacco or any tea for them. They are waiting to be paid. I must buy from you the goods they are waiting for."

"I know that. I know all that quite well. You'll take those skins back and I'll give you as many goods as you want on account. You will take the goods and give them to the hunters as advance payment for next year's furs."

"Yes, they will give the furs. I myself shall take everything they have."

"Good! We must buy up now all the furs they will have next year. Understand, Alitet?"

"Alitet understands everything. All the skins will come to me, don't worry."

"But you must listen carefully to me and do as I tell you. You know that I always do my best for you. I shall instruct you how to trade with the American schooner and how to trade with the tundra hunters and those on the coast. Listen. I haven't told you anything about this before. In the summer when the schooner arrives I shall tell the captain that you have a great many furs and he will want to come and see you. We shall trade together like partners."

Alitet bent forward listening intently to Charlie.

"It is a good thing I brought Tygrena," he was thinking. "I've never seen him in such a good humour. He will be very generous."

"I shall give you a great many iron goods. And you will see that they get to the hunters in good time. Now, Alitet, you know what you have to do?"

Alitet winked slily.

"Alitet knows everything. Alitet is smart!"

"Okay! Now we can drink as much as we like and have a good time."

CHAPTER XXVII

Tygrena walked back to the sled. This was her first visit to Loren. She felt rather out of place and annoyed at Alitet for bringing her here.

Remembering the fat white man with the glass windows over his eyes and his funny speech Tygrena smiled.

Old Rynteu came over.

"Woman," he said, "why do you sit here alone. Come into my yarang and rest after your journey. In Rynteu's yarang you will always find tea for yourself and food for your dogs. Charlie even gives sugar for the visitors."

Tygrena studied the old man attentively while he spoke. He was dressed plainly, his fur robe thrown over his shoulders. His head was bare and his face seemed kind and pleasant.

"I always feed your dogs," he went on.

"I do not know anyone here," Tygrena replied. "Why don't you take the sled and the dogs over to your yarang?"

The old man wriggled his arms through the sleeves of his robe and picked up the brake pole.

"A good idea," he said. "Come along."

At that moment Tygrena noticed Vaamcho. "You go on by yourself," she said to Rynteu. "I'll be along in a minute," and she ran over to Vaamcho who was fussing with his bearskin.

"What are you going to do with it, Vaamcho?" she asked him after they had exchanged greetings.

"I was going to sell it but you and Ali-

tet interfered. The bargain was not clinched. Now I shall have to take it back. Alitet is bound to spoil everything."

"Vaamcho, he drove the dogs like mad all the way, as if chased by evil spirits. And as soon as he saw the Americano he dropped everything and went to him. He never leaves his dogs like that. He does not trust anyone with them."

"Did you see Charlie, Tygrena? People say he has a marriage partnership with Alitet."

Tygrena thought of the fat, ugly white man and said nothing.

"They are bad, Tygrena. Wolves, both of them," said Vaamcho and swore an oath. "There is some more news. Have you heard?"

"What news?"

"Aye is here. He has come to sell some fox furs belonging to his master Yatkhyrgin."

Tygrena pricked up her ears.

"He asked about you. He is working for Yatkhyrgin as a herder. He has ceased to be a coast dweller. He says he feels too shamed and miserable to live on the seacoast. He gave his rifle to Yatkhyrgin."

"Perhaps Aye wants to work for a wife. Yatkhyrgin has many girls," said Tygrena.

"I do not know," replied Vaamcho.

"Where is Aye?"

"In Rynteu's yarang, relating his news. He has been there since morning. Let's go to Rynteu's yarang, it is the source of all news. Anyone who has tidings to bring is a welcome guest anywhere."

There was great excitement at Rynteu's. Aye lying on a pile of skins with his arms behind his head was speaking when they entered.

"When I came to Yatkhyrgin, he asked me: 'Have you left the coast for good? Why? Is it bad there?'

" 'Yes,' I said, 'it is bad. Alitet took my betrothed away from me. And my hands do not want to work any more.'

"'Aha,' says Yatkhyrgin, 'That suits me. I do not need your hands. I need a pair of good feet to mind my herd. If you run well and take good care of the herd you will eat well. And we'll find a girl for you as well.'

"Just then the women came in with some rich boiled meat.

"'Have some,' offered Yatkhyrgin. I started to eat.

"'Well,' he says, 'I see you're a good eater. It remains to be seen whether you're as good a herder. If you're not I'll throw you out!'

"So I went to the herd. You think it is a simple matter to look after reindeer. You must make them graze all the time and never let them lie down. They must eat a lot of moss and get fat. No, it isn't easy. In snowstorms you must be on your feet all the time keeping the wolves away, running about like a wolf yourself. And when the weather is fine you set traps to catch foxes.

"After a time Yatkhyrgin came out to the pasture on a sled drawn by handsome white reindeer.

"'Aye,' he says, 'I see you work as well as you eat. You have taken good care of the reindeer and have trapped some foxes besides. Let me have a look. Ah, they are indeed very fine. We shall have to take them to Red-Nose Charlie ourselves for Alitet will count them as ordinary skins. He counts the skins by the tail without examining them. Take a nap under a reindeer's belly until sunrise and then go down to the trading yarang. Put on my snowshoes, they are strong and you have a long way to go. When you come back continue to take good care of the reindeer and in three years I shall give you a girl.'

"Well, I don't need any girl," Aye went on. "My heart yearned for the coast. I wanted to set eyes on the people down on the coast and to hear them speak. It is good down on the coast. There are people here but up there I see only reindeer. And so I set out. In two days as I was approaching Hare's Trail valley I saw a fire burning. Next to it stood a dog team and a tent. I ran up and whom do I see but a Russian. He had come a long way. Three months he had travelled. He was bound for Cape Chukotka. Called himself a chief. But he could not be a chief because he had no beard.

"'Is it far to Cape Chukotka?' he asks me.

"'No,' I replied. 'One day's journey by dog sled.'

"'Only one day? Then I shall let my dogs rest a little more. Sit down and have some tea with me.'

"He had sugar, rusks, meat in tins, tobacco—everything. Perhaps he was a chief after all. All night we sat up talking. He asked me a lot of questions. I talked so much that my throat got dry. And he kept asking more and more questions. Then he

himself began to speak. He said such things that made my head reel to listen. He told me that over there on the mainland where the Russians live there had been a war. Remember we heard talk about it here? The rich fought the poor. The poor won and all the rich were driven out, and simple folk like us have become the chiefs and are making their own laws. He spoke about Charlie and about Alitet too. He said the Americano would be driven away from this coast. And Alitet as well.

"'We'll put you in the store to trade with the hunters,' he said."

Aye laughed. "He was too young to be a chief. He said that a new law of life would soon come to Chukotka, and this law would travel all along the coast and all over the tundra. Perhaps he did not know what he was talking about. . . ."

Silence reigned in the room. No one had ever told such fantastic stories here before. Where had Aye learned to spin such yarns? Was it not perhaps the spirits he had met with in the valley of the Hare's Trail? Who knows whom a man might meet travelling alone in the tundra.

"And what happened to the Russian?" someone asked.

"He took me part of the way on his sled and then headed straight for the cape. I told him that he wouldn't be able to get through that way because of the mountains. True, there is one gorge but it is not easy to find. 'Oh, I'll find it,' he said. He had a paper with him that showed all the rivers, the coast line and the sea. He shook my hand in parting and said:

"'Goodbye Aye! We will meet again soon. You and I are going to make great changes here. We are going to build a new life.'

"A queer chap! A new life! Even to build a new yarang is not easy. I don't know what kind of a man he was."

"That was not a man," said one of the hunters, "that must have been a spirit."

Yarak moved closer to Aye.

"Was that a Russian law he spoke of, the white man's law?"

"I do not know," Aye said evasively.

"You cannot trust the white men. I have seen many of them on the American whaleboats," said Yarak. "They are great frauds. And you can never understand what they want. Their laws are like the wind: it blows now one way, now the other. What was he called, this Russian?"

"Andrei," said Aye. "He has kind eyes and I believe he speaks the truth."

At that moment Vaamcho entered followed by Tygrena. She slipped her handsome robe off her shoulders and sat down by the entrance.

"Kakomei, Tygrena!" cried Aye, rising on one knee. "Have you too become a trader?"

Tygrena looked at Aye without replying.

"Go on with your story, Aye!" the hunters urged from all sides.

"You spin some fine yarns."

"They have taught you some great fairy tales up there in the tundra."

"Tell us some more about the beardless one."

Vaamcho leaned over to his neighbour and asked in a whisper: "What was Aye talking about?"

"Some very interesting news. I have never heard anything like it before."

"Go on, Aye, speak. Why are you silent?" Vaamcho urged.

But at the sight of Tygrena Aye seemed to have lost the power of speech. He wanted to ask her how she was faring but the presence of so many other people embarrassed him. After all everyone knew that Alitet had taken Tygrena away from him. They might even scoff at him. There were all kinds of people. It was as if someone had laid a heavy hand on his heart, and he wished Tygrena had not come. To hide his confusion Aye lit his pipe. He was about to move over to where Tygrena sat when a woman looked into the room.

"Tygrena," she said, "Alitet is looking for you."

Tygrena was glad of the opportunity to leave. There were too many curious eyes in Rynteu's yarang.

"Why did you let your betrothed go, Aye?" one of the hunters leered.

Yarak threw a wrathful look at the hunter. The taunt stung him as much as Aye.

"It is good to see your own betrothed led away under your nose," the wiseacre continued, enjoying Aye's discomfiture.

Yarak clenched his teeth, swung around and struck the man in the face. The scoffer put his hand to his nose and crawled away into a corner. In the tense silence that followed, Aye threw on his fur robe and went outside.

No one understood or sympathized

with Aye so much as Yarak. They had indeed much in common. Both wanted to build up a family and both were frustrated in their desire. And a hunter without a wife was a laughing stock.

Yarak hurried after Aye who was walking down to the seashore. He caught up with him in silence and in silence the two walked side by side until they came to the ice fields.

The sun had set behind the hill. It was a calm evening. Over in the distance they could see the outline of Mr. Thompson's house. A light appeared in the tiny window but almost immediately it disappeared as the curtain was drawn.

"Merkichkin!" Yarak swore softly. "Charlie always does that when he has a woman with him."

Aye kicked savagely at the snow. Now and then he glanced with hatred at the white man's house.

"It is hard for you, Aye," said Yarak. "I know how you feel. I wanted to marry Mary but Charlie drove me out. He swore at me. Then he seized me by the leg and dragged me out. It was shameful. Every white man makes his own laws."

"Charlie dragged you by the leg, and Alitet is dragging the heart out of me, as you would drag the heart out of a reindeer carcase. Ah, it is painful, Yarak. Often I have wanted to shoot myself. But now after that Russian told me so many things, I've been thinking and thinking, until my head seems ready to burst. And I cannot fathom the meaning of all he said. It was too much for one night. You know what he told me, Yarak? He said that under the new law Alitet would no longer be a rich man."

"Do not believe him, Aye. The white men are all alike. Their tongues flap in their mouths like a rag in the wind. I saw many of them on the American whaleboats."

"But the Russian has the eyes of a truthful man. He said that the Americano would be driven away from the coast too."

Yarak laughed.

"Who can drive Charlie away? His goods make him strong. When he meets the Russian they will drink their firewater together and laugh. They have the same laws. I know. I have seen what happens when white men visit Charlie."

"No, Yarak! This is a different man. He is young but he talks like an old man. He talks quietly and wisely. He says he has brought many different laws with him. He has brought a law on marriage as well. That is what he told me."

Vaamcho appeared from behind an ice hill.

"What are hunters doing in the ice fields without their rifles?" he asked with a smile. The others laughed.

"It is a bad day for trading," Vaamcho went on. "I brought a fine white bear-skin, but before I could barter it Red-Nose Charlie went away. Left everything and went off with Alitet for the whole day. Whenever Alitet is here the trading is bad. He brought Tygrena to Charlie."

"Hush, Vaamcho!" cried Aye. "A terrible wrath seizes me when I hear these things."

"There is wrath in every man, Aye. But yours is hidden deep within you."

A groan of anguish escaped from Aye, and he bit so savagely at his hand that it bled.

"Charlie will pour firewater down Tygrena's throat, I know," said Yarak. "It burns the throat and makes the head swim and drains the strength leaving you weak and helpless. He always does that to the women."

A feeling of profound humiliation combined with a thirst for revenge shook Aye to the depths of his being. With the mocking words of his comrades ringing in his ears, he ran back to Red-Nose Charlie's house, tore open the outer door and rushed to Charlie's room but the door was locked on the inside.

"Why have you locked yourself in?" he cried shaking the door violently. "Are you afraid of the white bear?" The key turned in the lock and Mr. Thompson's irate face appeared.

"You goddam son of a bitch!" he said thickly. "What do you mean by breaking into my house? Get out of here! Get out or I'll break every bone in your body!"

Aye leapt up and seized Charlie by the throat. The suddenness of the attack took Mr. Thompson by surprise. He lost his balance and fell heavily onto the rocking chair with Aye on top of him. Under the weight of the two men the rocking chair overturned and the two went crashing to the floor, upsetting the huge gramophone horn which fell with a loud clatter. Charlie struggled for breath, his face purple.

At that point Alitet rushed in from the adjoining room. He hurled himself on Aye and tore him away from Charlie. Maddened with rage, Aye struggled out of his grasp, leapt to the table and kicked the lamp onto the floor. Under cover of darkness he slipped out of the house.

"Where's my rifle! Quick!" Alitet cried. "I'll shoot that pup on the spot."

But Aye was already running up the hill toward the settlement. On the way he met Vaamcho and Yarak.

"Alitet is after me," he said panting.

"Run quickly to the tundra," they advised. "We'll send Alitet off on a false scent over to the ice fields."

CHAPTER XXVIII

The sun poured down. The air was clear and transparent and the dazzling whiteness of the snow blinded the lone traveller. Floundering in the soft snow the dogs hauled the sled with difficulty. Andrei Zhukov plodded along beside the sled sinking almost knee-deep into the snow at every step. Presently he paused and looked around him. Mountains and valleys stretched as far as the eye could see, and in this vast glittering expanse of snow and ice he was alone. Andrei shouted at the top of his voice, and listened with pleasure as the sound echoed over the snowy wilderness.

Andrei Zhukov, a student of the geography department of the Petrograd University, had arrived in Petropavlovsk on Kamchatka in the autumn of 1922 and had eagerly accepted the proposal of the Provincial revolutionary committee to make the overland trip by dog sled to the Arctic coast pending the opening of the navigation season. And so one bitterly cold winter's day he had left by dog sled to follow the trail over the tundra to the Chukotsk Peninsula, Russian territory from time immemorial.

Andrei had a natural flair for languages. At university his old professor, a member of the Narodnaya Volya movement who had spent many years in tsarist exile in the Far North, had taught Andrei to speak the language of the Chukchi people. Now the knowledge was standing him in good stead. In the course of his three months' journey Andrei had met quite a few of the local inhabitants of whom until then he had known only from books and ethnographical studies.

Spring had come and his long journey was coming to an end. Kamchatka and the Koryatsk land were now far behind him and he was already making his way through the Chukotsk tundra.

Andrei stopped the sled and stared at the mountains that stretched in an endless chain into the distance.

"Where is that gorge the reindeer herder told me of yesterday?" he wondered.

No tracks marred the virginal whiteness of the snow. He longed for the sight of a reindeer or even a hare. His stock of food was running low and the strain was already beginning to tell on the dogs.

Andrei realized that he would have to give up the idea of trying to find a short cut. He took his seat on the sled and steered for the coast. The dogs, sensing their master's decision, pulled more willingly at the traces.

They moved along for a while at a good pace when suddenly Andrei felt a pain in his eyes so excruciating that he cried aloud. He held his hand over his eyes for a long time but the pain did not abate, and when he removed his hand he discovered to his horror that he could not see anything. It was as if a thick veil had dropped between him and the world.

Fumblingly, he reached for the brake pole and halted the sled. He rubbed his eyes furiously until he realized that it was no use. The dogs lay quietly in the snow basking in the warm sunshine. Verny, the lead dog, was stretched out in front enjoying the opportunity for a rest. The great silence surged in Andrei's ears. It was as if the world had dropped into oblivion.

Andrei leaned back on the sled and lay thus for a long time listening to the silence. The sun was approaching the horizon and a light frost touched the moist snow, forming a thick crust.

Andrei decided to continue his journey, driving into the wind which he knew was blowing from the North.

"Forward, Verny!" he shouted and away they sped again, slipping noiselessly over the snow. After several hours of smooth running Andrei suddenly felt the dogs change their pace to a gallop.

"What is this?" he wondered and halted the sled thinking the dogs had picked up some trail.

He soon found that his supposition had been correct. Running his hand

over the snow he felt the rut of a sled. Good, he thought, there must be some settlement nearby.

The dogs ran on merrily but Andrei no longer felt the wind in his face. He took off his hat and was listening intently to the sound of the wind in order to gauge his direction when he heard someone call his name:

"Andrei!"

"What hallucination is this?" Andrei wondered. "Who can be calling my name in this frozen wilderness?"

Again he stopped the sled and pricked up his ears turning his head in all directions. And when he heard the call a second time, he answered: "Eh-hei!"

The man moved noiselessly over the snow and Andrei was not aware of his presence until a voice beside him asked:

"Andrei, is it you?"

Andrei started, swung round in the direction of the voice and demanded gruffly: "Who is it?"

"It is I, Aye. Have you forgotten me, Andrei?"

"Aye!" Andrei cried joyfully and rushed toward the voice. He hugged Aye tightly as if afraid that he might prove to be a phantom after all.

"It's my eyes," he explained. "Something has happened to them. I have gone blind."

"It is nothing," Aye reassured him. "That often happens when the sun is very strong. Snow blindness we call it. Bind a strip of reindeer skin or some other dark cloth over your eyes and it will pass. Tomorrow you will be all right."

At Andrei's request Aye cut a strip off the black travelling bag he carried on the sled and blindfolded his eyes.

"Well, friend!" Andrei said, "If you are not in a hurry why not camp with me here for the night: We shall drink tea and talk."

Aye readily agreed.

While Aye busied himself putting up the tent and preparing the tea, Andrei groped his way over to the dogs and patted the lead dog Verny.

"Now we're all right, Verny!"

"By the way, Aye," he asked, "What trail is this I have been following?"

"Your own, Andrei," was the other's calm reply. "I have examined it. You have been travelling in a circle." Andrei realized that had he not chanced to meet Aye he would have gone on driving round in circles until his eyesight returned, for dogs will not swerve from a trail unless urged by man.

Before long they were comfortably ensconsed in the tent.

When the snow had melted in the kettle Aye removed the bandage from Andrei's eyes, moistened it and tied it on again.

"Aye, you were right when you told me I would not find the gorge. I wasted much time driving round these mountains looking for it. And then my eyesight went, I might have perished if I hadn't met you."

"No," said Aye, "a man cannot perish in the mountains." Then suddenly he asked: "Andrei, is it true that you are a chief?"

Zhukov smiled.

"Yes, it is true. But I am not the biggest chief. The big chief will come in the summer when the navigation opens. He sent me on ahead."

"Ah," said Aye, sighing as he thought of his own plight. "I am in great trouble, Andrei. I must roam about in the tundra or risk being shot like a hare."

"Why? Who wants to shoot you?"

Amid the stillness of the Arctic night Aye unburdened himself to the Russian. He told him what had happened in Red-Nose Charlie's store, why Alitet was after him, how Alitet had stolen Tygrena from him, and many other things.

Outside the tent the dogs slept peacefully. The sun dipped below the horizon briefly and reappeared, casting a ruddy glow over the snowy expanse.

"Don't worry, Aye!" said Andrei when the Chukchi had finished his story. "You have nothing to fear. No one will dare to molest you. I promise you that. And now let us sleep for a while and continue our journey together down to the coast."

But Aye did not sleep. A herder is accustomed to staying awake for two and three nights in succession. He walked about near the tent, examined the sled, tightening the straps that had become loosened here and there. Then he sat down and examined the board that served for a seat on the sled. After some thought he took out his knife and cut off a small piece of the wood. With deft fingers he carved out two round pieces like spectacles, drilled tiny holes with the point of his knife, tied them together with a slender strap and tried them on.

"Good," he said, satisfied with his handiwork.

Presently Andrei awoke and called to him.

"Why, Aye, I can see you quite well," Andrei cried joyfully as Aye crawled inside the tent.

"I've made a pair of blinkers for you," said the other. "In the mountains people with weak eyes always wear them when the sun is bright." And Aye showed him the home-made "spectacles."

Andrei laughed. "But my good friend," he said, "wood is not transparent."

Aye showed him the tiny peep-holes in the wood and when Andrei tried them on he found he could see quite well.

"Why, they are marvellous," he said. "You're quite an expert, Aye. I would never have believed that wooden spectacles could be so effective. Well, Aye, let's be going."

"It will be bad for me to show myself on the coast."

"Don't worry, Aye! Everything will be all right."

CHAPTER XXIX

Throughout the journey down to the coast, Aye was silent and downcast in anticipation of what was to come. Andrei, on the other hand, seemed to grow more and more lighthearted the closer they approached their destination.

His eyes protected by Aye's ingenuous optical device, he urged on the dogs who kept up a good pace.

At last Aye saw the contours of Loren in the distance. He did not relish the prospect of meeting Alitet and Red-Nose Charlie so soon after their violent encounter. But, after all, what did it matter even if they killed him? Aye was fed up with life in any case.

"We shall soon be there," he told Andrei.

"Splendid! I was beginning to get impatient."

"Andrei, will you go to the trade yarang? To Charlie? Perhaps then I had better stay here?"

"Why should I go to him? I want you to take me to some hunter's yarang."

"Are you afraid of Charlie?"

Andrei laughed heartily in response and there was something about that laugh that inspired Aye with confidence.

"Let us change places, Aye, and you drive the dogs to any yarang you think best."

Aye headed for Rynteu's yarang. As the sled drove up a crowd of people gathered.

"See! Aye has brought a white man with him!"

"We met again in the mountains," Aye whispered to his friend Vaamcho, "this is the Russian chief I told you about."

Then he turned to Andrei and said in a low tone: "Andrei, this is Vaamcho. Remember? The hunter whose bait Alitet poisoned with lamp fat at Three Hills."

"Ah, Vaamcho! Greetings, friend," said Andrei seizing the lad's hand and shaking it heartily. Aye looked on, his face beaming with joy. Vaamcho was tongue-tied with embarrassment. Never before had a white man shaken him by the hand.

"Go inside," he said to Aye, "I'll take care of the dogs."

Aye led the way inside the yarang. The hunters, who were still gathered inside waiting for Charlie to complete the bartering, gaped when they saw Aye enter followed by the Russian chief of whom he had told them such fantastic tales only the day before. They examined the new arrival with undisguised curiosity.

They saw a tall well-built young man who in spite of his youth wore an air of authority that betokened the "chief".

Aye pulled out a new reindeer skin, spread it out and invited Andrei to be seated. Andrei stretched out on the rug and filled his pipe.

"Let someone call Charlie here," he said.

The hunters looked at each other in amazement. The Russian must be mad. Whoever heard of Charlie climbing the hill to where the Chukchi yarangs stood. He simply would not come and who could compel him?

"Tell him the Russian chief would like to see him at once," Andrei said sternly.

"He must be a chief if he can talk like that," thought the hunters. "But who would dare to go to Charlie with such news? Vaamcho perhaps? No, it will be more fitting for Rynteu as the owner of the yarang to go and invite him. Moreover, he is older than the others."

The news was so staggering that Rynteu

in spite of his age ran all the way to Charlie's house without pausing to catch his breath.

In the meantime the hunters waited in great excitement to see what would happen when the two white men met.

The fact that the Russian had not wished to go to Charlie himself astounded them. Nothing of the kind had ever happened in Loren before. The Russian seemed to have become quite friendly with Aye. No doubt he did not know that Aye was an ordinary herder and that he had tried to strangle Charlie.

Yarak, who considered himself an authority on white folk was particularly interested.

Mr. Thompson was no less surprised by the news than Rynteu. Soon the whole settlement was in a state of turmoil. And although after his drinking bout and his struggle with Aye, Charles Thompson was not exactly at his best, he nevertheless decided that he had better see this man without delay. He was not in the best of tempers as he set out on his unaccustomed journey up the hill. The steep climb left him quite breathless and he was panting as he entered the room where the hunters were assembled. He glanced around the room and as his eyes alighted on the Russian he greeted him politely in Chukchi.

"Sit down, please," Andrei Zhukov replied.

Charlie brightened. "Oh, you speak English?"

"A little."

"And whom have I the honour to address, may I ask?"

"Zhukov, is my name. You are Mr. Thompson I gather?"

"Yes, Charles Thompson. It is a pleasure to meet another civilized person in a place like this. But I cannot understand why you did not come to me. This is the place I keep for the hunters who come to trade with me. You will find the air somewhat less foul in my humble abode."

"The air does not bother me, Mr. Thompson. As a matter of fact I made a special point of coming here instead of to your house."

"But Mr. Zhukoff, that was not very polite of you, was it?"

"In my opinion courtesy demands that you, as a foreigner, Mr. Thompson, ought to be the first to welcome a representative of the new Russia."

"Are you a Bolshevik?" Mr. Thompson inquired in some surprise.

"Yes, I am a Bolshevik."

Mr. Thompson knew from what he had read in the American press that Bolsheviks are fierce-looking, blackbearded men with knives between their teeth. This fair-haired lad with the blue eyes who spoke English quite well and looked rather like a Norwegian seemed hardly the type.

"You mean a real Bolshevik?" he insisted.

"I am a representative of the Kamchatka province Revolutionary Committee, Mr. Thompson and I have some serious matters to discuss with you."

"Why, certainly, Mr. Zhukoff. I shall be only too glad to do anything I can to help you."

"Are you aware, Mr. Thompson, that when the navigation season opens representatives of a trading firm are coming here?"

"Yes, I read something of the kind in the newspapers."

"Then I suppose you know that the Soviet Government has granted this company the right to do all the trading and buying in this region. I'm afraid that means you will have to prepare to wind up your business, Mr. Thompson."

"Does the same apply to Stevenson, Clark and Olson?" Mr. Thompson hastened to inquire.

"Yes, they will have to stop trading too."

"And Bryukhanov and Karaev as well?"

"Certainly. There will be six large fur trading stations on the coast."

Yarak, who was able to follow most of the conversation, stuck out his neck in his efforts to catch every word. Something incomprehensible was taking place before his eyes. Everyone had believed that Red-Nose Charlie was as much part of the landscape as the tundra moss, and that no wind would ever blow him away.

Judging by all the signs, the beardless Russian must indeed be a chief, and a very big one if he could talk thus to Charlie.

"And, Mr. Thompson, there is something else I wanted to take up with you."

"Yes, Mr. Zhukoff, and what is it?"

"From what I have heard your conduct has been such as is not befitting to a

civilized man." Mr. Thompson raised his eyebrows and his breath came faster.

"I refer to that unfortunate incident which occurred yesterday in your house. This man has told me all about it." Aye started as Andrei laid his hand on his shoulder. "Is that how a cultured, civilized man should behave in a strange land?"

Mr. Thompson grew red as a beet. He bitterly resented being lectured by this young Russian whippersnapper in front of the hunters, particularly since Yarak understood some English.

"Yarak," he said, "go outside."

Yarak rose unwillingly.

"No, Yarak, stay here," said Zhukov. "I need you."

Mr. Thompson seemed to go limp. He sat motionless and no one had ever seen him look so helpless.

"That will be all, Mr. Thompson. I think I have made myself clear?"

"Oh yes. Very much so."

"Then I shall not waste any more of your time. Goodbye."

"Goodbye," muttered Mr. Thompson as he lumbered out of the tent.

"Scoundrel!" Andrei said softly in Chukchi.

The sun had reached its zenith and was now on the wane. Outside the hunters were gathered in knots, talking in great excitement. This was news indeed! There would be something to tell when they returned to their own settlements all along the coast. With news like that, one would be a welcome guest in any yarang.

Yarak stood in the centre of the crowd recounting all that had passed between Andrei and Charlie. But the gist of what had happened was clear to everyone.

What amazed Vaamcho most of all was that white men could be friends with the poor hunters as well.

The sun sank earthwards, but still the people did not disperse. Presently the night frost began to touch the moist snow. Alitet had left Loren in a great hurry some time before.

In Rynteu's yarang Andrei sat with Aye, Vaamcho and Yarak eating fresh seal liver.

"Andrei, where will Vaamcho take his white bearskin now?" Aye asked.

"Let him sell it to Charlie. He may continue trading until the summer."

"And what shall I do? Charlie did not pay me in full for the foxes. And the pelts are not mine, they belong to Yatkhyrgin."

"Go to Charlie and ask him for the remainder of the goods. Or are you still afraid of him, Aye?"

"No. I am not afraid of him any more. And now Alitet is gone. There is nothing to fear!"

Having drunk his fill of tea Andrei went outside with his new friends who busied themselves with his sled. Aye was the most eager of the three. Yarak still glanced suspiciously now and again at the new white man.

When Andrei took out his wooden goggles and put them on, Yarak went over to him and offered him a pair of regular sun glasses.

Andrei was delighted. "Thank you, these are just what I need. How much do I owe you?"

"Nothing," replied Yarak.

Andrei took out five rubles and handed the money to Yarak.

"What for?" he asked.

"To buy yourself another pair."

"No. Charlie does not give anything for paper money. He only trades for furs."

"You tell him that I said he was to sell you a pair of glasses. This is Russian money and he is obliged to take it."

The dogs were already straining at their harness, eager to be on their way. Andrei shook hands with the hunters.

"Well, friends, goodbye. We will meet again before long."

The next moment his sled was speeding over the snow.

"He said, 'friends'!" Vaamcho murmured gazing after the disappearing sled. "Did you hear what the big chief said? 'Friends!'"

Translated by Ida Payne

(*to be continued*)

PAVEL BAZHOV, NARRATOR OF URALS FOLKLORE

Pavel Bazhov, descendant of a long line of Urals metal workers and now famous as a narrator of Urals folk tales, passed his childhood on the western slope of the Urals, where the abandoned Gumeshki ore pit lies at the foot of two mountains—Dumnaya and Azov-Gora. Here, among the mountains that cut the boundless Russian plains from north to south, Bazhov's mother and father and his grandparents before them had lived and worked. Generation after generation of Bazhovs had toiled in the ore pits and at the furnaces. His grandfather had been a serf and had spent all his life tending the copper smelting furnaces in his master's factory. His grandmother, Avdotya, was one of the serf girls taken from their homes and sent to the neighbouring factories to be wedded "to whomsoever it be decreed." Avdotya was fortunate in the husband chosen for her and she lived happily with him for many years. When the serf law was abolished she took her family and returned to her native village of Sysert. Here, on January 28, 1879, the future Soviet writer Pavel Bazhov was born.

His childhood was spent in constant wanderings from one Ural plant to another. His father, a puddler by trade, never kept a job long owing to his "unruly nature." He would be discharged and then kept on the waiting list with vague, indefinite promises, sometimes for more than a year at a stretch, but he was never driven from the gates for good. "There is nothing left to sell for food," writes Bazhov in his childhood reminiscences. "Even so my father does not go to the factory as a day labourer for he knows that he will not be taken on anyway, and besides it is a disgrace for a skilled worker to do so. He tries to make a living as best he can—by fishing, prospecting for gold, hay making. . . . "

At last, although he hated the idea, Bazhov's father was forced to go to the owners to beg for work. Then it began: "Come again in a week's time," "Come after Easter," "Wait until Christmas." And so it went on. . . "Bazhov's mother slaved away tirelessly night and day, ruining her eyes completely, crocheting fine lace and knitting fancy stockings for the rich ladies. This was not so much for the sake of what it brought in but as a bribe to the master's women. In the end, my mother won out and the masters deigned to give my father work."

In the course of their wanderings the Bazhovs found themselves at the ancient Polevskoy Plant. Little Pavel, who was not yet eleven years old, had already heard many stories about these places. His father and grandmother had told him about the mysterious Azov-Gora, the mountain whose countless hidden riches were guarded by the beautiful maiden, Azovka or the Stone Maiden; about Mount Dumnaya (from the Russian "duma"—a thought) on whose summit Pugachev (the leader of the 18th-century peasant uprising) was said to have sat and meditated. But the boy was chiefly interested in the terrible Mount Mednaya (Copper) about which grandmother Avdotya always said: "That is the most accursed place of all: How many folks it has devoured!"

However, his disappointment was great when he came to Mount Mednaya and the Gumeshki ore pit. Bazhov recalls: "As we approached the Polevskoy works, I immediately began to look for Mount Mednaya which I had imagined so clearly. All around the works lay many fir-clad hills, so usual in the Urals, but there was no copper hill. In answer to my question the carter pointed out some place to the right and said, 'You can't see it because of the houses.' What a disappointment! What kind of a mountain could this be that you could not see over the house tops? Just a tiny molehill!"

When he finally saw this "mountain"

after a few days, the boy almost wept. Why, there was no mountain at all! "There was only a field of the most dismal appearance, with grass growing there in patches." From that day on Pavel worried his father to death with his questions: It's called a mountain and there is only a flat field, what's the idea? His father patiently explained to the boy: "copper ore was mined here in olden times. That means there is a mountain here. Ore is always taken from a mountain. Only some mountains appear above ground, while others hide in the earth." The Gumeshki that so disappointed the little Bazhov was not only extremely rich in copper ore but it was also the cradle of wonderful legends told by the miners and known as the "secret tales."

Many fantastic stories about the magic mountain hidden deep in the earth were told by the old miners and factory workers. "There were many of these old men working at the Urals factories," relates Bazhov. "They were experienced and skilled craftsmen who had worked at the furnaces, in the mines and ore fields for a quarter of a century, but who had grown weak and were no longer of use to the owners, and so they were transferred to easier work as foresters or watchmen. As a rule they were extremely interesting types. They were philosophers, with a philosophy based on a rich experience of life. They had seen and known many interesting things and they had plenty of time in which to tell their tales." They were the guardians of the popular legends and tales of the mining folk. It was they who told the stories about the life of the workers in olden times. They were poets and historians in their own way. And from them Pavel Bazhov learned to know and understand the beauty of the Urals; from them he received his first inspiration to write and learned the peculiar style of the workers' tales.

In the Urals, the earth itself seemed to give birth to legends and fairy tales. Mysterious and boundless is the wealth contained in this earth, peerless in its primitive beauty is this mountain land with its forest-clad hills, its cold, clear, deep lakes, its high skies and shady valleys. The miners, ore cutters, metal smelters, all these folk who were inseparably bound up by their labour with the nature of the Urals, sought explanations for the origin of the "earth's riches" and created legends reflecting the proud love of the Russian people for their homeland.

The oral legends, carefully handed down from father to son in the workers' families, urged the people never to forget the inexhaustible treasures hidden in the soil of the Urals, not so much those already discovered as those that still lay hidden in the depths of the mountains. In these tales, the Azov-Gora was always spoken of as "the most precious place." Subsequent prospecting showed that the guesses of the old miners were both daring and correct: the plain around Mount Azov contains many valuable minerals—copper ore, rare white marble and rich gold sands. These hypotheses and guesses of the miners gave birth to the "tales of treasure hunts" telling of fabulous wealth, of treasures hidden in the depth of the mountains and guarded by the "secret force"—the gigantic snake Poloz, its daughters Zmeevki (snakelets) and the maiden Azovka. The "secret force" did not let man reach the treasures of the soil. But the daring miner overcame all obstacles, conquered the "secret forces" of nature and won the treasure.

There was also another form of the "secret tales"—the "robber tales" or "tales of the 'free people'" i.e., serf workers who had fled from the backbreaking slave labour of the factories. They united in outlaw bands and, like Robin Hood and his merry men, defended their freedom with arms. In popular memory these tales were also connected with Azov-Gora and the Gumeshki ore pit. Azov-Gora and Mount Dumnaya served the "free people" as vantage posts, from which they could watch the movements of the merchants' caravans and keep a lookout for the appearance of punitive detachments. When the Gumeshki deposit was discovered in 1702, it proved to be an old, abandoned ore pit. In addition to the ancient mine, the remains of a forge were also found there, apparently this had once been the camp of an outlaw band that had lain for a long time at Mount Dumnaya and whose numbers included "smelters" and "smiths" who forged their weapons. The "secret tales" lauded the courage and daring of the free craftsmen. The figure of the "noble outlaw" arises: the ataman of the "free people" defends the workers. The "secret tales" embodied the people's protest against the oppression and rightless existence of the gifted Russian craftsmen, who reached the heart of the mountains, who mined the "earth's riches," who smelted the ore and forged the metal. Dreams of a free life in which man would be the absolute master of his own work were shaped into tales and handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation, in secret from the factory owners who suppressed their propagation, cruelly flogging the workers and sending them into exile.

In the beginning (in the 18th century) the "secret tales" are still a part of the general folklore and only gradually does the mining element come to the fore in them. In the first place, the "earth's riches" are no longer spoken of as a treasure, i. e., gold, silver, money. Gradually, in the mining tales these riches take the form of precious ores or gold sands. The fantastic side of the tales also changes. The Maiden Azovka, from the fierce guardian of the treasures changes into the Mistress of the Copper Mountain, the Malachite Lady, who owns all the ores and guides their exploitation. She patronizes the working people, helps them by showing them where the ore and precious stones lie hidden. But she hides and "draws away" the ore as soon as she sees greedy people, eager only for gain, if the exploitation turns into robbery. The Mistress of the Mountain becomes the defender of the workers against the serf owners, and this evidently takes place under the influence of the image of the noble outlaw from the "robber tales." The figure of the Malachite Lady, who is the incarnation of the forces of nature, also acquires a sharp

social significance; she synthesizes the motifs of both types of "secret tales." The mining motif also comes to the fore in the tales of the skilled craftsmen and their wonderful art. The value of these stories lies in the fact that the popular fantasy has turned to the portrayal of the labour process itself and of the joys of creative labour.

The young folklore of the mining people, however, contrary to the peasant folklore, has not developed into a definite crystallized form but still exists in the shape of family tales, sketches from life, separate fantastic fragments, and embryos of themes.

This was the poetical legacy which the Soviet narrator Pavel Bazhov inherited from his ancestors—the Urals metallurgical workers.

The first childhood impressions, received at Polevskoy works from talks with the old miners and gold seekers, and from the "secret tales" made an indelible impression on the boy and predetermined his career. An avid thirst for knowledge awoke in him a desire to penetrate the innermost secrets of Nature. Pavel Bazhov's parents, though simple working folk, noticed their son's exceptional abilities and did everything in their power to help him make his way in life. He was sent to Ekaterinburg (now Sverdlovsk) where he attended the city school from 1889 to 1893. Subsequently, Pavel Bazhov entered the Perm Seminary and on graduating became a teacher. For the next 18 years, every summer finds Bazhov spending his holidays roaming through the Urals, seeing "how the people live," tirelessly recording proverbs and popular sayings, tales and legends, single words, names, vivid details of the life of the Urals mining folk.

Bazhov studied the life and work of the stone cutters, polishers, foundrymen, steel chasers, armourers and many other Ural craftsmen, and held long conversations with them about the secrets of their trade. In the variety of crafts, in the craftsmen's constant striving for perfection, Bazhov saw the manifestation of true creative effort. He strove to acquire an understanding of all the finer shades of craftsmanship so as to catch the elusive moment where labour turns into art. Bazhov's travels, his observations of the local customs and language later found direct expression in his volume of stories called *The Malachite Casket*.

October 1917 ushered in a new epoch in the history of Russia; the young Soviet democracy was born. Bazhov understood that a road to a new and properly organized life was opening before the people. He dedicated his life to the struggle for the consolidation of Soviet power and in 1918 he joined the Communist Party. He went to the front as a volunteer and fought in the Civil War from 1917 to 1921. During those years, he took up writing as a profession. He edited frontline newspapers, wrote feature stories, humorous sketches and short stories. From the very first steps he realized that literature is a weapon as well as an art.

The years of new wanderings—this time in the smoke of battle—through the Urals and Siberia provided Bazhov with many vivid and unforgettable impressions. He saw his people, daring and talented, in the revolutionary struggle to build up the new ways of life. Amidst the deprivations and trials of the Civil War matured the concept of his chief work—*The Malachite Casket* consisting of the delightful, poetical tales embodying the image of the People, the Craftsman, the creator of his own destiny.

A road of long and persistent search lead the author to the creation of this unique book of philosophical tales. For twelve long years Bazhov was seeking a style: from 1924 when his first book *Urals Lore* appeared (followed by a number of others including a charming autobiographical story about the author's childhood—*The Green Mare*) to 1936 when the first tales were written for *The Malachite Casket*, the book which brought the author general recognition.

The first edition of *The Malachite Casket* was published in 1939. It was followed by two new books: *The Key Stone*—a collection of mining folklore (1942), and the *Tales About Germans* (1943). In recent years Pavel Bazhov has been working on two new cycles: *Tales About Lenin* and *Armourers' Tales*. All the above books, as well as Bazhov's new tales published separately, form the harmonious, consistent work of a mature artist who has found his theme, his form and style. Bazhov himself regards his tales as an integral whole and has combined them for new editions under the general title of *The Malachite Casket*.

The basic theme running through this book is that of creative labour. It is treated in three separate subordinate themes: craftsmanship, happiness, and human dignity. To the first of these—the theme of craftsmanship—is devoted a cycle of tales about master craftsmen, who occupy the central place in Bazhov's works. Here the main motif is the comparison of creative labour with ordinary mechanical work.

True craftsmanship means creation, innovation and not mere pedantic professional conscientiousness. This is poetically interpreted in the tale *The Breath of Life*. Its hero wanted to "put his hands to every trade." His friends and relatives laughed at him, but Timokha insisted on having his own way: he learned all trades and in each one he reached "the heart of the matter." Only the result was an accumulation of rules of every craft and not real craftsmanship. Timokha understood this when he was apprenticed to the old charcoal burner Granddad Nefeda. The latter welcomed him with the sly words: "You'll leave me when you burn the charcoal better than I do!" This seemed a simple trade, yet Timokha could not outdo the old master. And the secret was that Nefeda was never satisfied with what he had done and was always searching for new and better ways. He taught Timokha: "never stand and look down at the finished job, but think how to do the next one better." He taught him to look for the "spirit of every job: it runs before you and draws you on."

The living soul of every craft, the "breath of life" in it comes from the creative art,

the imagination of the craftsman. In the tale *Ivanko-Krylatko* (the winged) Bazhov portrays the rivalry between two master craftsmen for the best chased sword: the German master Fuiko Stoff and the young Russian craftsman Ivanko. Two principles of craftsmanship are contrasted in this tale: mechanical perfection and creative talent.

Fuiko the German knew his job well. He was "the master of the tool in his hand and not lazy either." His chasing was clean and accurate, the gilding was stainless, and the design perfect, yet "there was no life in it."

Ivanko was quite different: he was a craftsman with imagination, not afraid to ignore hard and fast rules and to follow his flights of fancy. The ornaments chased on his sword were not the conventional little horses, but real horses, such as he knew them in life—in full gallop, fleet and winged.

Ivanko's idea—the winged steeds—outraged the German pedants who were masters in the Russian factories in olden times and they drove the youth away. But this idea proved Ivanko a true master craftsman: the winged steeds were like a poetical metaphor, conveying the idea of swift movement.

The search for the new, a poetical imagination are the signs of the true master craftsman. This thought lies at the bottom of the second motif in the same cycle of tales about the master craftsmen, i. e., the struggle of the artist with his material in the process of putting his plan into effect.

In Bazhov's tales the creative art of the master is not portrayed as divine inspiration but as the result of knowledge accumulated by hard work. Not passive observation and a blind copying of nature are demanded from the artist but an understanding of his material, a struggle with the elements.

The story of this struggle for the synthesis of nature and art is beautifully told in two tales *The Stone Flower* and *The Miner*.

Danila, the young craftsman, tried to reproduce the loveliness of an ordinary forest flower in stone. The vase he was making gave him no joy—it was smoothly and cleanly finished, but there was no life in the design and therefore no beauty. "That's the whole trouble," he said, "there's nothing to find fault with; it's smooth and clean, the designs come out well . . . but where's the beauty of it? Take that flower there, the commonest there is, yet it does your heart good to look at it. But who would get any pleasure out of looking at this vase?" *(The Stone Flower.)*

Danila seeks the secret of craftsmanship in the stone itself. This is just Danila's mistake: he goes no further than the observation and imitation of nature. The stone masters him and not he the stone. And Danila fails. He had been lucky in his search for material for his flower vase, he had found a great lump of malachite shaped like a flower and of the right colouring: "He examined his find this way and that. . . It had everything he wanted: the colour deeper at the bottom, the veins just where they should be."

But although Danila thought that the stone "might have been made for his work," the vase was not a success. The craftsman chiselled a "cup like the cup of the hemlock flower, but—it wasn't. . . The flower no longer looked alive and had lost all its beauty." Still not understanding the reason for his failure, the craftsman appeals to the Mistress of the Copper Mountain—the Malachite Lady. "I can't try any more," he says to her, "I'm fair worn out with this one and it doesn't come out. Show me the Stone Flower." And although she tried to talk him out of it: "Maybe you'll try your hand again at making one by yourself!" he insisted.

It is not given to all to look on the "Stone Flower", which grows far down in the mountain domains of the Malachite Lady. The fairy image of the "Stone Flower" symbolizes the beauty of the stone itself, the beauty bestowed by nature on a fragment of stone, a piece of wood, on all material that demands the craft of a master to become a work of art. Whoever "has seen the Stone Flower knows what real beauty is, and becomes a mine craftsman."

The "mine craftsmen" are the pupils of the Malachite Lady. They have learned the secret of true craftsmanship. They live and work inside the Copper Mountain, doing the bidding of the Mistress. Their work is magical—they have learned to breathe life into the dead rock.

By insisting upon seeing the "Stone Flower" Danila seeks inspiration from the stone, from nature. His wish is granted, he sees the secret beauty, the loveliness of the stone is laid bare before him. But that proved to be not enough. The stone cannot inspire that which the master should be able to find for himself by applying his human ability to generalize.

" 'Well, master Danila, have you looked your fill?' the Mistress asked.

" 'You'd never find a stone to make that flower!' cried Danila.

" 'If you had imagined this flower yourself, I'd have given you a stone like that one, but now I can't.'

"And with that she gave a wave of her hand. There was a rushing noise again, and then Danila found himself in the quarry with the wind whistling through it as it does in autumn."

This scene is meant to emphasize the primary importance of the human poetical imagination. A true craftsman must have "a winged fancy," a daring imagination, and then the material will obey him. That is what the Malachite Lady taught Danila.

Bazhov's poetical image of the Mistress of the Copper Mountain is an incarnation of Nature herself, inspiring man and his work by her beauty, laying bare her secrets before him. In folklore the Malachite Lady is only pictured as the Mistress of the Mountain's riches, but Bazhov presents her as the guardian of the secrets of high craftsmanship. Moreover, she is the embodiment of the eternal dissatisfaction of the true artist, of his seekings.

As a contrast to Danila the stone chiseller, the man of restless strivings, Bazhov portrays the malachite worker Evlakh Zhelezko *(Zhelezko's Covers)*, the master craftsman who had reached the summits of his trade.

On the malachite covers of an album to be presented to the tsar, the fantasy of the master had drawn a design which, while emphasizing the natural beauty of malachite—its delicate bluish-green shades changing to the darkest, satiny green — revealed the heart of the stone in which the "joy of the earth was gathered."

As you look at Evlakh's malachite covers you see that the design wrought in the stone resembles "the wind-ruffled water in spring, trembling in the sunshine. The waves rippled over the green surface of the stone . . . true craftsmanship, that was all you could say about it."

And the art of the master had been to find and to portray in the stone itself, the poetical image of spring waters in the sunshine, so clearly conveying the joy of life. This was not done by mechanically copying the natural design of the stone but was the result of the artist's creative imagination. Evlakh's craftsmanship was perfect because he had achieved harmony with nature, harmony between the material and his own poetical imagination.

The theme of human happiness is closely interwoven with that of craftsmanship in Bazhov's tales. To it he devotes a cycle of tales about the gold seekers, or about "the first gold miner."

In this cycle the master craftsman is still the hero, only in place of the skilled stone cutter, chaser or copper smelter, we have the old, experienced miner who "peers into the earth" and knows how "to find the traces of the earth's treasures." Bazhov has taken this hero from real life and not from the characters of the "secret tales." About the successful, experienced gold miner the people said that he had dealings with the "secret force," that he was friends with Poloz, the snake, and with the Mistress of the Mountain. Such men were called wizards. Bazhov's second cycle tells of these men.

In this cycle we meet a number of new, fantastic characters: the giant snake, Poloz (the Crawler), the guardian of the gold ore, his daughters, the Zmeevki (Snakelets), the old woman, Sinyushka, who guarded the bottomless well full of precious stones, the little maiden "Will-o'-the-Wisp", Ognevushka-Poskakushka (the "Little Fire That Hops Around"), and Silver Hoof, the goat.

The old miners are well acquainted with the ways of the "secret force." Granddad Efim tells the young prospectors about the signs that will help them to find gold: "Most likely you've heard the old folks say that wherever the gold lies a little maiden appears and dances before you. Wherever this maiden shows herself, there is gold. Not deep down, either, but quite near the surface." *(Ognevushka-Poskakushka.)* The old hunter, Kokovanya, tells his adopted daughter, Darenka, about the magic goat: "He is not like other goats. On his right foreleg he has a silver hoof. And wherever he stamps with this hoof, a precious stone appears." *(The Silver Hoof.)*

The "Wizards" form a link between the real world and the imaginary one. They have discovered the secrets of Nature, have made friends with her secret forces. They preserve the true stories of the workers and the legends that arose around the work of the gold miners.

Side by side with these personages, a new hero appears in this cycle—the young gold prospector and miner, the youth in whom the unquenchable thirst of the searcher has been awakened. That is the "first gold miner" to whom the whole of the second cycle is dedicated. Of this brave company is Fedyushka, the boy who stubbornly searches for and finds the maiden "Will-o'-the-Wisp"; Denisko, the lad who discovers the site of the gold nuggets; Ilyukha, a worker in the gold fields, whom Grandma Sinyushka loves for his honesty and daring, for his skill at his work and finally, the two boys Lanko and Leiko, who hunt the miraculous "blue snake."

These young heroes are distinguished by their nobility of purpose, by the absence of the greedy desire to find the treasure in order to grow rich. They are guided by the desire to learn the secrets of nature. Although Sinyushka promises Ilyukha to show him her countless treasures, the youth is not to be tempted. He came to the magic well because he had heard that the old woman turned into a beautiful maiden. *(Sinyushka's Well.)*

Sinyushka puts him to the test. A blue column of fire shoots out of the well, and one after another, two maidens appear: a princess, tall and slender as a young fir tree, carrying a gold dish with "gold dust, precious stones, and nuggets the size of a loaf"; behind her comes a merchant's daughter bearing a silver tray with precious gems. But Ilyukha refuses these riches. Only when the old woman appears as a simple maiden in a blue kerchief, who hands him an old basketful of berries with the words: "Take it, dear Ilyushenka, a gift from a pure heart," only then, looking into the maid's blue eyes, Ilyukha accepts Sinyushka's gift—the precious stone berries.

The great Russian critic Vissarion Belinsky wrote about the folk tale: ". . .Whatever man does not understand appears to him as an awful mystery, and we have wizards, magicians, evil spirits, magic snakes, water nymphs, witches," who serve as "the personification of the invisible, mysterious, and mostly hostile forces." The unknown and, therefore, hostile nature is here opposed to man.

Bazhov gives us a different portrayal. His heroes have an active knowledge of Nature, have discovered her secrets. Hence the motif of man's friendship and unity with the "secret force." In Bazhov's fairy tales, the treatment of the fantastic brings out that which is wonderfully human in it.

In the fantastic personages of his tales there is always something strong and powerful, something that compels us to understand that we are not dealing with an ordinary human being. This strength is the poetical expression of the real strength of nature. Nevertheless, Bazhov's heroes do not bow before these forces or acknowledge them to be incomprehensible. They are, on the contrary, their equals.

Pavel Bazhov's charming tales reveal the

poetry and joy of human labour. An absolutely new, fantastic figure arises here—that of the merry young wife, Veselukha, inseparably embodying joy and poetic fantasy *(Veselukha's Dell)*.

Veselukha is the incarnation of the joy of spring. She herself is colourful and stirring. "She wears a gaily-coloured, flowered sarafan, and a bright kerchief around her head. And she is comely to see, with merry eyes, finely chiselled lips and splendid teeth. If a girl like that passes by, you'll remember her for years." The joy she spreads is heady, she draws men out into the open air, to the green fields and the blue lakes. Veselukha's trade is a special one—"from spring to autumn she brings joy to all, and after that to the chosen ones." She hates those who are tearful and sad; give her only "song and dance, laughter and merriment." When she enters a hut, "the chairs begin to dance." This, however, is not the only meaning conveyed by her image: Veselukha is also the incarnation of the human fantasy, of the vivid, clever imagination and inventiveness of man.

At difficult moments she comes to the help of the master craftsman: shows him a new design, reveals the inexhaustible wealth of nature's colours, the poetry of spring. That is why she is often seen by the masters who find the colours for the design, by those who have a "merry and a daring eye."

Work brings joy when it is inspired by the creative imagination, the "winged fancy" of the master, declare Bazhov's tales. And such creative work is the meaning and essence of human life.

Although Bazhov's prospecting tales are based on the discovery and exploitation of the earth's riches, the motif of magic enrichment, so characteristic of folklore and of the miners' "secret tales," is absent here. Bazhov's heroes, as a rule, do not grow rich but take from nature only as much as they need to live on. The magic snake Poloz appears to the serf miner Levonty and shows him and his children "rich gold." Levonty comes of a long line of miners, he is a meek toiler; his health had been sadly broken down by long years of toil in the mines. Being useless and broken, he is granted "the gift of freedom" by his master. Levonty begins to prospect for gold for himself. Not out of greed or the desire for wealth, but, having been a miner all his life, he has no farm and knows no trade. He is accustomed to "dig in the earth." And he wants to live by his own work, as formerly. By this he wins the admiration and respect of the great Poloz. "I know him," says Poloz about Levonty, "he is at death's door, but still wants to earn his bread. He is an independent fellow." Levonty has been robbed of his youth and strength by the serf owner. Poloz's help to the miner comes as an act of justice: the gold Levonty finds is not a gift or charity but just payment for many years of hard toil.

Bazhov introduces a new meaning into the fairy tale conception of magic wealth. In his tales treasures and riches do not figure as accidental successes, as a source of profit and wealth. Bazhov portrays the miners' conception of the "earth's riches" as wealth belonging to those who find and mine it. A new motif arises here, that of the destructive force of cupidity and greed. How the real riches of nature turn into phantoms is shown in the tale *The Mistress of the Copper Mountain*. On parting from her lover, the young miner Stepan, the Malachite Lady gave him a handful of her tears—green emeralds—with the words: "Men give great wealth for these little stones, you will be rich." But to Stepan the stones were precious for another reason: he knew that they were the tears of the Malachite Lady, the Stone Maiden, and the miner kept them in memory of the Mistress of the Mountain and of her beauty—he could never forget the Malachite Lady. And that is why he never sold them to anybody, but kept them secretly from his own people, and died with them in his hand. Stepan's pure approach to the riches of the earth is devoid of any greed. This is the only right attitude—such is the moral of the tale.

Tanyushka, the heroine of *The Malachite Casket*, grew angry with her bridegroom, the greedy nobleman, Turchaninov, and melted away, flinging him the magic jewels which had tempted him. Overjoyed at the sight of this fabulous wealth the bridegroom forgot all else and made to grab the jewels. But he was punished by the "secret force." "Every stone he touched turned to a drop of water in his hand. Some drops were clear as a crystal tear, some were yellow, and some were dark and thick like blood. So he had nothing."

The happiness that comes of the possession of wealth is ridiculed and denied in Bazhov's tales, as not worthy of man. True happiness does not come from the accumulation of wealth, but from creative work and the knowledge of nature.

In the contrast and duel between the good and bad characters in his tales, Bazhov unfolds the theme of human dignity. It does not belong to any given cycle of tales but is characteristic of all Bazhov's works. In this theme Bazhov touches upon the ethical side of labour and shows how creative work yields both material and spiritual benefits, how it forms and tempers the human character.

Bazhov's positive hero is the working man—the master and creator. Such a master craftsman knows his own value; he is proud of the creative strength that lies in his skilled hands. "Working hands, you know, can do everything," says Evlakh Zholezko, the master stone cutter. In answer to the delighted praises of a foreign jeweller, eager to know what instruments were used by Evlakh in carving his wonderful works, the latter answers with proud irony: "A well-known instrument—hands!"

Bazhov portrays proud and daring men, who do not bow before the master or before riches, whose cherished dream is that the time will come when "man will deprive gold of its power." (*The Dear Name.*) In the tale *Zhabreyev's Messenger*, the orphan boy, Denisko, refuses to humiliate himself before the drunken gold prospector, Nikita, who scatters handfuls of silver rubles and sweet-

meats amongst the crowd of youngsters. Nikita tried to break down Denisko's pride. He draws a wad of notes out of his breastpocket and throws them at Denisko's feet. But the latter, a lad of spirit, says: "I don't take alms, especially those cast before me like scraps before a dog." Nikita, dumbfounded by these words, stands staring at Denisko. "Then he thrust his hand into his high boot, dragged out a bit of rag and unrolled it, revealing a nugget of perhaps five pounds in weight and flung this on the ground before Denisko, shouting: 'Don't boast too much! I'll see you pick that up!' But Denisko did not pick it up; he only looked at it and said: 'I would like to find such a nugget myself, but I don't want yours.' " And he turned his back and walked away.

Denisko is proud because he knows the price of human labour and knowledge: he does not value the gold nugget for its worth in money, but for the knowledge and skill that went into finding it.

This feature of respect for work is characteristic of the boy Denisko and of the old malachite worker Evlakh Zhelezko of whom the people said that he was not to be bought by any money because "he respected his craft, and valued it above money" (*Zhelezko's Covers*).

Bazhov's tales show that a worthy human character is formed only in the process of labour. The refusal to work leads to the degeneration of the individual. In the tales, man is appraised by his work.

The poetical image of Bazhov's good characters is counterposed by satirical, negative figures, representing either the idle, degenerate owners or the overseers, stewards and head miners with their lackey's souls. All of them have common features—the fear of work and inability to work.

In *Sochen's Stones* it is said about the central figure that "in his youth he had hung at the heels of the rich people, but had been driven away for some misdeed. But the habit of licking the master's plate had stuck to him like a disease." This Sochen, who had no use for work, found himself a "fitting job"—he became a spy for the overseers on the deposits.

"Severyan, the Flogger" the overseer who hailed from the impoverished nobility, was also described as a man "who knew no trade and could only flog others." The chief features of his character were ignorance, hatred of work and of the workers.

Both Severyan and Vanka Sochen, as well as all the other negative types in Bazhov's tales are nonentities, absolutely good for nothing, to use a mining term—"empty ore." The Mistress of the Mountain punishes Severyan for his cruelty to the workers: she turns the overseer into a lump of stone. But there is something strange about it: those who attempt to approach Severyan find an empty space where his body should be, although all around lies excellent malachite. The satirical metaphor — empty ore—here acquires a material meaning (*The Steward's Soles*).

In Bazhov's satirical tales, in which the negative characters are ridiculed and deservedly punished, the functions of the image of the Malachite Lady change. She becomes the bearer of ethical moral principles.

The humanism of Bazhov's tales is Soviet humanism, based on a firm belief in man, not an abstract human being, but man, the creator.

Bazhov's tales express an optimistic outlook on reality; they say that man is the master and creator of his own fate. There is no avenging hand of destiny, no absolute power that works vengeance without the will or knowledge of man. To all, even to the worst, a chance is given to stop and think and to improve. But Bazhov shows that not all are capable of using this chance. Only the working man can emerge honourably from grim trials.

Denisko, the young prospector, discovers a deposit of wonderful nuggets in the heart of the mountains. "He cleared a space and began to dig out gold nuggets from the sand. He had already dug up a whole lot, when suddenly he noticed that it was growing darker and darker." The exit from the mountain was beginning to close. Denisko understood the grim warning of the "secret force" and was able to conquer himself. "Apparently I've been greedy, what do I want with so many? I'll take two, and that'll do." As he made this decision the mountain opened: "Go out, in that case" (*Zhabreyev's Messenger*).

Man can change his own destiny. And this destiny discloses his inner nature, his true value. The motif of "trial by ordeal", closely connected with the image of the Malachite Lady, is humanistic in its content. Thrice the Mistress of the Copper Mountain warns Severyan to stop tyrannizing the miners. But nothing has any effect on Severyan. To change himself and his habits demands an effort. And Severyan and those like him are not capable of labour, of effort.

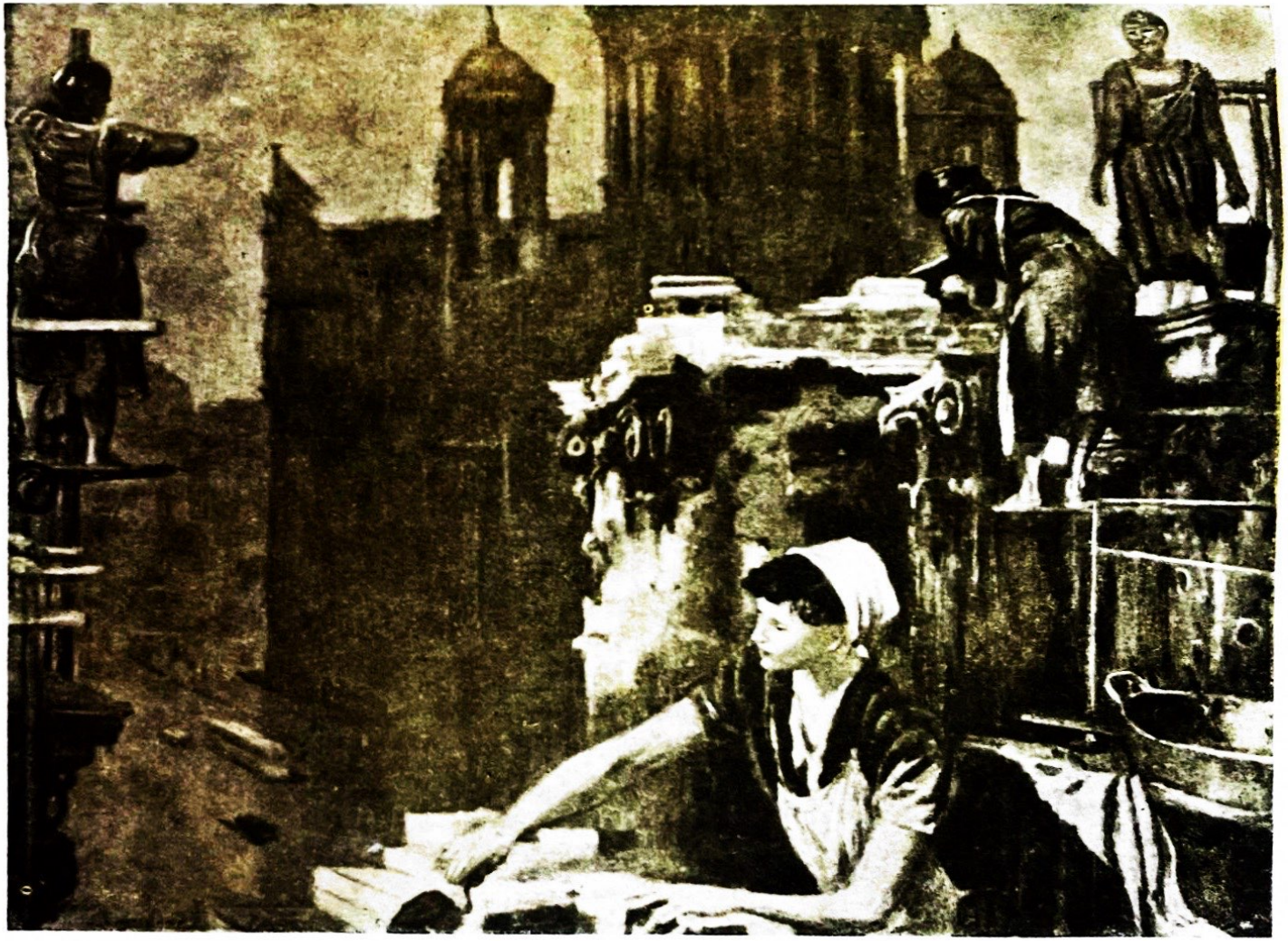
On seeing death face to face, Severyan, in horror, tries to beg for mercy. But the Mistress of the Mountain is implacable. She does not want submission and cowardly entreaties from men but demands that they fight bravely against the worst sides of their nature. The search for man in man is the new function of the Malachite Lady in Bazhov's tales.

Denisko is a real man, he does not grovel before the "secret force." He conquers the greed that has suddenly awakened in him. He is absolutely his own master. And his will power and determination are not accidental attributes. They are bred of the habit of work, hard, persistent work. Only thanks to this could Denisko pass the test.

Bazhov lauds that force which forges a human personality, that is positive in all respects. That force is labour.

In all his charming works Pavel Bazhov affirms the great value of man, the beauty and power of his labour.

LUDMILA SKORINO



The Restoration of Leningrad

By Y. Pimenov

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NEW BOOKS

NEW POETRY

Evgeni Dolmatovsky. *A Single Fate.* A book of poems. *Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 111 pages.

Mark Maximov. *The Legacy.* Poems of the partisans. *Young Guard* Publishing House. Moscow. 88 pages.

Victor Urin. *The Victors' Spring.* Lyrics. *Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 88 pages.

Nikolai Rylenkov. *The Creation. Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 112 pages.

Alexei Nedogonov. *The Flag Over the Village Soviet.* A poem. Magazine *Novy Mir* No. 1, 1947. Pages 1-36.

In the introduction to his book of poems, Evgeni Dolmatovsky tells why he could not fulfill the wish of the woman to whom his verses are dedicated and who asked him to "write a tale of happiness for her," "a book of miracles, in which death is conquered by salvation" and in which "the trees of an enchanted forest rustle."

Dolmatovsky spent four years with a tank unit "on blood-drenched ground, under the thunder of the great guns" where it was difficult to write about some imaginary world. The magic tower was replaced in the poet's imagination by the tank turret in which he fought and by the towers of the Kremlin, symbolical to him of the life of the country. And the poet pleads that he "could not invent anything more wonderful than the difficult tale about our fate," in which "truth and fantasy mingled."

The "tale about our fate," about the events of our times and the heroic deeds of the Soviet people, which the poet finally tells was born in much greater travail than any happy mirages of the enchanted forest from the "book of miracles". It was the fate of the poet to search for "truth and fantasy" on the battlefields, where "the granite was mixed with blood, and the sand with lead." This meant a tireless and fearless participation in the grim reality of life, not only as a poet, but as a citizen and a fighter.

This contact with real life showed the poet all that was new, beautiful and exalted in Soviet reality, heights of the human soul which could never be reached in the abstract world of imagination, by aimless flights of fantasy. That is why Dolmatovsky like other Soviet poets, preferred the difficult road of portraying the beautiful in the life and work of his people, to any poetical fioritura on the subject of the "enchanted forest."

This is equally true of Soviet poets who work on epics, on monumental forms, on an expansive portrayal of life and of the lyricists whose appeal and profundity of feeling lies in the intimacy of their language. Evgeni Dolmatovsky is a narrator; both in his long poems and in the majority of his verses he portrays the development of events, the story of man and his life from all angles, a story that rises to a culminating point and has its denouement. Like his contemporaries and friends, Constantine Simonov, Margarita Aligher and Mikhail Matusovsky, Dolmatovsky searches for ways of combining accuracy and laconism in poetry with the contrasting pictures reflected in his verse, without any ornamentation, use of metaphors or imaginary associations. All this results in a broad and free portrayal of life, usually found only in prose.

The above volume of his new works contains three poems: *Missing, I'm Following On* and *Bon Voyage*, all written by the poet during the last three years of the war and replete with autobiographical motifs. In his introduction to all three poems, Dolmatovsky writes that "the author resembles his imaginary hero."

The poem *Missing* is dedicated to the beginning of the Soviet-German war, to the grim days of the retreat of the Soviet troops. "Hold out! Hold out! Grit your teeth and bear it!" is the leitmotif of this poem, which tells the tale of the inexhaustible courage of a soldier, taken prisoner, sent to a camp to be shot and escaping on the way. The poet describes his wanderings through the Ukraine where he was hidden and saved by a Ukrainian peasant woman, his meeting with the partisans and, finally, his return to his own lines.

The figure of the Ukrainian peasant woman, Christina Verba, is shown in all three poems. The recounting of the events as they occur reveals the plot of a poem in which the motifs of courage, endurance, patience and strength of will of a patriot are depicted with convincing force.

The second poem *I'm Following On* begins with a chapter headed "Again About the War" and leads the author along the roads of the offensive, through those same places which he passed when making his way from the German prison, across the line of the front, back to his own people. This time the poet travels these roads as the liberator of his native land. But in the village where the Ukrainian peasant woman, Christina Verba, hid him, he no longer finds his saviour, for the Germans have carried her off to Berlin and have taken her child to a German hospital in order to pump the blood from its body. This accounts for the feelings of the poet as he advances to the German frontiers, steps upon German soil and, finally, in the ranks of a Red Army unit, helps to batter down the gates of Berlin.

The poem *Bon Voyage* was written after the war. In the beginning the poet introduces us to a hero, disqualified for further service in the army by the medical board and bidding farewell to his tankist comrades in distant, foreign lands. The hero reviews in memory episodes from his own life, the usual road of a Soviet citizen, the builder and organizer of a new life, and its defender from the first day of the war. And the hero is confronted with the question of what the ex-soldier is to do next?

Unhurriedly, he sets out on his return road home, "tired, silent, unknown, dragging heavily his rolled greatcoat."

He by-passes Berlin and Warsaw in order to pay another visit to the Ukrainian village where Christina Verba, who does not recognize him now amongst the many whom she had rescued, had saved his life. Christina has lost her husband and daughter in the war, but she finds a new child amongst the orphans in a children's home.

After the first happy meetings in Moscow with his old friends, our hero feels that he cannot stand "this idleness any longer," that there is a great gap between him and his former friends. So he chooses work where it is most difficult and interesting, where there will still be a battle front after the war. He finds himself in the shop of the Stalingrad plant that he defended during the war. The poem ends with the image of the express train in which the ex-soldiers, with "certificates signed by Victory herself" ride to "climb the barriers," guarding the "city of Happiness," still far away.

Victor Urin's *The Victors' Spring* is the first volume of verse published by this young poet. The author himself classifies his poetry as "lyrics". And indeed, Victor Urin's poetry is not of a narrative nature and does not develop any given theme. It only expresses the sentiments or impressions of the author. These verses are highly intimate in their intonation: the poet seems to emphasize that he is addressing his personal feelings to the reader and this address bears the imprint of heart-to-heart confidences.

Victor Urin went to the war from the school bench and returned a mature poet. The characteristic features of his verse are their vitality and topical sound. His lyrics are full of energy and purposefulness, devoid of any passive meditation. The poet wants to live "countering all the fates." Urin is attracted by all swift changes in his surroundings, including nature. He lauds the pouring rain in which he feels the beating pulse of life. In the poem *May* he sings of the wind which brings the feeling of the mutability and variety of nature, carrying joy to the heart.

Mark Maximov's book of verse *The Legacy* is an unusual combination of the narrative style of Dolmatovsky's poetry and the intimate lyrical note so vividly expressed in Urin's work. Maximov took part in the partisan war in the enemy rear and there he wrote the verses which compose this book. In an epigraph in the first part of the book addressed to his contemporaries, the poet says that "but yesterday we were called boys" yet tomorrow, people, recalling us in the events of those years, will speak of "how our fathers went to battle."

The thought of the historical feat which fell to the share of the youth and brought the boys of yesterday an early but honourable maturity is omnipresent in this volume. Some of Maximov's verses are poetical reports of real events. One of these: *In the Land of Silence* bears the subtitle *An Essay*, and the poet adds a footnote to the episode of the battle, giving the numbers of the five German divisions that attacked the partisans, a fact subsequently discovered by reconnaissance. However, the strength of emotion and the organic talent for poetical generalization turn this essay into a ballad, a composite picture of partisan warfare. Maximov's works are characterized by their passion and purposefulness, the concreteness and reality of the poet's dreams. In the poem *Moscow* the poet describes how, while living on the little, enemy-surrounded island of forestland, he and his companions never forgot Moscow, which was constantly waiting for them, and supporting them in their fight in this distant, woodland fortress.

The poets of the older generation also find that which is new in Soviet life and assert this in their works. The lyrics of Nikolai Rylenkov, author of *The Creation*, are devoted to post-war rehabilitation. The volume owes its title to the central poem in the collection, written on the eve of the war in anticipation of its grim events. By its structure, this poem, as it were, serves as an epilogue to the war impressions of the poet: it ends with a triumphant picture of Nature in her glory and abundance, the picture which expresses the author's hopes for a similarly luxuriant blossoming of human life.

A number of Rylenkov's poems are replete with sadness for the passing of youth: the well-defined feeling for nature is accompanied by regret for that inconstancy, which is so attractive to Victor Urin. However, this touch of sadness does not stifle the general life-asserting emotion and only serves to lend a peculiar colouring to the poet's interest in present-day realities, in the true pictures of life in the Soviet Union, an interest permeating the entire cycle of Nikolai Rylenkov's verse.

Alexei Nedogonov's first poem *The Flag Over the Village Soviet* is dedicated to post-war life on a collective farm. Like the hero of Dolmatovsky's *Bon Voyage*, the hero of Nedogonov's poem, Egor Shirokov, returns from the front to his native village. Shirokov does not hurry home but wants to survey "the land which we saved" and re-travel his war road. And so he rides on horseback from the centre of Germany to his native village in the heart of Russia.

Shirokov returns to his village in time for his father's funeral and immediately takes the latter's place in the collective farm. He meets another collective farmer, Dubkov, who has also just returned from the war. But Dubkov is in no hurry to take part in the joys and sorrows of collective farm labour, confident that his battle feats give him the right to rest and idleness. Soon Dubkov finds himself alone, and he feels his isolation acutely. In his pictures of real life that are sometimes stern, sometimes even cruel but always truthful, Alexei Nedogonov depicts enthusiasm for action, labour and creation, the mental wealth of the collective farmers. The poem expresses many new features in the mentality of the Soviet collective farm peasants, in their morals, in their relations with one another. Nedogonov's style is fresh and concrete. As Egor Shirokov walks over the snow-covered field, thinking of the life awaiting him in the village, his mind draws pictures of the green grass, the waving corn. The rhythm and vocabulary of the poem are in the tra-

ditions of Russian folklore; stylistically Nedogonov is closely related to Tvardovsky.

NEW TALES BY PAUSTOVSKY

Constantine Paustovsky. *Stories. Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 183 pages.

Constantine Paustovsky is well known to the Soviet reader as the author of numerous short novels and stories amongst which *The Black Sea, Romanticists, Colchis, Kara-Bugaz* and *The North* are deservedly popular.

The new volume contains 19 stories, some of which have already appeared in periodicals, others are published for the first time.

In one of these stories (*The Keeper of the Buoys*) the author relates the conversation between an old boatman and a number of village boys. Very eloquently the old man tells the boys about his native region, its forests and rivers, its wealth and beauty. In conclusion, he turns to the author with the words: "I'm trying to teach 'em . . . to teach 'em to love their native land. Without this love a man is not a man but just a bundle of straw."

Paustovsky himself is also an inspired teacher of "love for the native land" but he deals with the vast spaces of Russia and the people inhabiting these spaces, instead of with one small rural region. Paustovsky loves the Russian landscape and draws wonderful pen pictures of its distinctive features. The action of the majority of his new stories develops against a background of nature—a forest at night, an old, overgrown garden, a river in flood or an autumn field.

The story *The Old Boat* is particularly redolent of the charm of nature. The city girl Natasha comes to the preserves near the Volga, rarely visited by townspeople. With the old carter and the forester as companions Natasha finds herself in the woods at night:

"The forest, mysterious and vast as the ocean, stretched on all sides in the twilight of the night, in the odour of the dank earth and leaves, in the sharp air of the untouched thickets, in the steady glimmer of the sky. Natasha spoke in whispers, and even the old man and the forester lowered their voices.

"'This is a magic land,' muttered the old man, sighing. 'And the forest runs to the end of the earth. There isn't a better one in the world.'

"'Sleep, sleep,' cried a bird that had awakened somewhere overhead. 'Sleep, sleep.'

"'I certainly am sleeping,' thought Natasha and she laughed from pure happiness. This happiness gave her a cold shiver and she wished the night might last forever, that the cart might go on forever, rattling over the roots, that the forest might grow deeper and wilder."

In such inseparable, organic harmony with nature Paustovsky portrays man. In many instances the stories contained in the new volume are only short sketches made during the author's numerous travels. They do not pretend to be comprehensive. Frequently they are only hasty recordings of an accidental meeting or a conversation with a fellow-traveller.

The heroes of Paustovsky's stories are collective farmers, foresters, village children, workers, officers returning home from the army, whom the author meets in small cities, on trains and ships.

In most cases Paustovsky writes about talented, skilled craftsmen, who understand beauty and make beautiful things. Such is the heroine of the story *Nastya, the Lace Maker.*

The language of the stories is clear, pure and accurate. Paustovsky possesses the art of creating in a few words an expressive, sculptured image that lives long in the memory.

NOTES OF A YOUTH ORGANIZER

Irina Iroshnikova. *Somewhere in Siberia. Young Guard* Publishing House. Moscow. 232 pages.

Irina Iroshnikova's book does not claim to be a literary work. Written in unpretentious style in the form of a diary, at first glance it appears to be a collection of hastily put together notes. But the book has genuine literary merit worthy of a mature writer.

Most of the stories are complete in themselves, at the same time lending continuity to the narrative of the whole book.

This is how the book came to be written. In the autumn of 1941 Iroshnikova was sent to work at one of the big Siberian war plants as a member of a designing brigade. It was a grim time. Work at the plant was not keeping up sufficiently with the demands of the front. Production depended mostly on the youth, as the majority of the workers were all mere youngsters. Poorly trained and weak in labour discipline, these young people had to be organized and inspired with the desire to work selflessly for the needs of the front.

The young engineer, Irina Iroshnikova, was faced with a serious responsibility. She was appointed youth organizer at the factory.

Encouraged by her older comrades and given every support, Iroshnikova began to train her young colleagues, "beardless lads and girls with pert pigtails," persistently, and yet with great understanding and sympathy, instilling into them a sense of duty and a conscientious attitude towards their work, a feeling of pride towards their country.

It was no easy task to turn these raw, untrained boys and girls into socially minded, mature members of a working collective. Now and again some one faltered, or simply backslid, but Iroshnikova was always close at hand, tactfully, yet persistently pointing out their mistakes, reasoning, showing them the right way.

The young woman's educational method was simple and noble; it was based on trust, faith in those she was charged with. She believed that, with understanding and patience, and allowance for human weakness, she would obtain results.

The story of Vanya Kochin makes absorbing reading. From an idler and shirker, Vanya turns into one of the best workers at the factory and the reliable assistant of the youth organizer. But this transformation was no easy job!

Foreman Manevich, a harsh, intolerant man, considers him incorrigible. Reluctantly, he gives in to Iroshnikova and allows the boy to go back to work, taking his revenge

whenever there is a chance. This unnerves Vanya.

With malice Manevich informs Irina:

"I turned out to be one hundred per cent right. Your precious charge, Kochin, that you were so ready to vouch for hasn't turned up for two days."

Disappointed and downhearted, Irina wonders:

"Has he really cheated?" Then off she rushes to the factory hostel where she finds Kochin sprawling on his bed.

"Yes! That's right. I'm through! I don't care what you do, I won't go back. I'm not going to let anybody treat me like that! Do you know what Sisyphean labour is? Well, I do. I've felt it on my own back. The foreman made me carry heavy stones from one place to another. He can't stand the sight of me and I hate him! He wanted me to quit so that he would be in the right. I stood it a month, but I won't stand it any longer."

Iroshnikova, mustering all her tact and intuitively guessing the right psychological approach, appeals to Vanya.

The lad grudgingly agrees to go back, and, on his own initiative, asks to be sent to the most difficult shop, where he promises to do good work. Irina arranges his transfer herself.

Shortly after this Vanya's name is on the factory's board of honour.

One day a young lad came to see Irina at her office. He was a mere youngster in a sharp-pointed Red Army man's helmet of the Civil War days, wearing a greasy, quilted jacket that reached almost down to his knees and boots miles too big for him.

From under the helmet a childish face with two big gray eyes looked out.

"'I want to join the Young Communist League,' he said to me confidentially.

"'I see!' I could hardly keep a smile back. 'And where would you be from and how old are you?'

"'Sixteen. I'm in the mechanical shop, electrician's assistant. My name is Sergei Ivanovich Danilin.'"

"Sergei Ivanovich" was appointed to check up on expenditure of electricity at the factory, in which capacity he showed how strict he could be.

Noticing that the chief engineer was in the habit of keeping the light in his locked office switched on, Sergei Ivanovich began storming him with notes: "Please turn off the light—Inspector Danilin."

The notes were ignored; the light as usual was left on. At last, he received an answer chalked up on the door:

"The hell with you and your scribbling!"

Terribly hurt, Sergei Ivanovich went to complain.

He was burning with righteous indignation and just managed to mutter a few unintelligible phrases.

Iroshnikova took the matter to heart and went to see the chief engineer about it. Shamefacedly, the latter began to justify himself, giving as an excuse the fact that the switch was out of order.

Triumphant, Sergei Ivanovich awaited the end of the conflict in the corridor. In a twinkling he had the switch in order."

How just these young people are in their demands and insistence on their rights! Underlying their actions is a lofty consciousness of their dignity as citizens, deep confidence in their future. Modesty, and even timidness cannot hinder them in achieving their aim, however difficult it may be.

In the book there is one character who is always present—that is Irina Iroshnikova herself. While speaking of others, with deep emotion, she unconsciously reveals her strong will and firmness in her relations to people and events.

A. Herzen once wrote, that "the talent of education, the talent of patient love is met more seldom than any other." Iroshnikova's book shows that she fully possesses this precious, rare talent.

Somewhere in Siberia is Iroshnikova's first literary effort. Her style is terse and powerful; her characterizations are penetrating and laconic.

LIFE OF AN OUTSTANDING PAINTER

K. Kravchenko. *Evgeni Lanceret.* *Art* Publishing House. Mass Library. Moscow and Leningrad. 32 pages.

People's Artist of the R.S.F.S.R., Evgeni Lanceret (1875-1946), Stalin Prize laureate, was one of those outstanding masters who began their artistic career in pre-revolutionary times and ended it as true Soviet artists.

Evgeni Lanceret, son of the well-known sculptor E. A. Lanceret, grandson of the architect Professor N. L. Benoit, nephew of Leonti Benoit (architect), Albert Benoit (water-colour painter), and Alexander Benoit (famous artist and art historian), grew up in an atmosphere of refined culture, amongst books and paintings. This determined his artistic tastes, enabled him to gain a clear perception of the spirit of historical styles, bred in him an ardent love of books.

Amongst the great variety of genres in which Lanceret's artistic genius displayed itself (monumental paintings, portraits, landscapes, theatre decorations) book illustrations were, perhaps, his favourite field. In the history of Russian book illustrating Lanceret's graphic art holds a leading place, standing out even amongst the works of such masters as rallied around the magazine *The World of Art.* While these artists, carried away by their passion for the invention of intricate lines, isolated themselves from nature, from life, turning for inspiration to ancient books and finical antiquity of the Louis periods, Lanceret drew his inspiration from life and nature. On his extensive travels he acquainted himself with the wealth of the popular art of his own country and reproduced these impressions in his works with profound reality.

Lanceret's progressive views led him to turn his talent to revolutionary satire in the period of the revolution of 1905: he collaborated with the magazines *Zhupel* and *Adskaya Pochta*, edited by Maxim Gorky. Lanceret's lashing satire mercilessly exposed the reactionary forces of the autocracy.

When the great October Socialist Revolution took place Lanceret was already an es-

tablished artist, member of the Academy of Arts, but nevertheless it was only under Soviet rule that he was fully able to develop his versatile talent and give himself up to the interpretation of monumental concepts.

An ardent lover of the Caucasus, the artist spent many years there, sketching landscapes, local types, costumes, architecture, and so forth. After the Revolution he used these materials in creating a number of monumental works: a series of portraits of revolutionaries (Makhacha, leader of the Daghestan partisans, Sergo Ordjonikidze, and others); a large triptych *Red Partisans Coming Down From the Hills to Defend the Soviet Power*; a panneau for the State Museum of Georgia *J. V. Stalin Leads the First Political Demonstration of the Transcaucasian Proletariat in Batumi in 1902*; and other works.

In 1932 Lanceret worked on ornamental paintings for the Kazan railway station in Moscow. He had to restore the ancient traditions of monumental painting in order to carry out his concept: to show that the Moscow-Kazan line connects the European and Asiatic parts of the vast Soviet Union; the theme of the plafond is the union of the working people of all the nations of the U.S.S.R.

In 1945, Lanceret designed two painted figures, symbolizing "Victory" and "Peace" for the vestibule of the Kazan station: a grim, courageous soldier and a mother, tranquil and smiling, with a child in her arms. Lanceret continued work on these designs to the last days of his life.

Evgeni Lanceret deservedly holds one of the most honourable places amongst Soviet artists.

Kravchenko's book gives a short outline of the many different aspects of this artist's work.

BOOKS ON ARCHITECTURE

Architectural Archives. Vol. 1. Publishing House of the Academy of Architecture of the U.S.S.R. Moscow. 144 pages.

Characteristic of restoration and fresh construction in the U.S.S.R. today is a highly modern technology adapted to an organic architectural style treating the great traditions of the past in a new manner. The architecture of the past, for this reason, offers fresh interest not only to the student of art, but also to the designer. A thorough study of this subject is now being made by the Institute of the History and Theory of Architecture in Moscow. Documents having a special bearing on old architectural monuments are published by the institute in a series of symposiums under the general title: *Architectural Archives*.

The first symposium of the *Archives* contains a very valuable treatise dating back to the middle of the 18th century. *The Functions of Architecture*, as it is called, sets forth the architectural principles of building construction in the times of Peter I. This exhaustive treatise (the result of three years of collective effort on the part of the commission) on the construction of St. Petersburg written in 1737, summed up the experiences gained during the construction of the new Russian capital. It was commissioned by Empress Anna and completed early in the reign of Empress Elizaveta. It was to have served as a code of instruction bearing the seal of law.

Every possible question pertaining to Russian architecture receives attention and elucidation to a greater or lesser degree in *The Functions*, the thirty chapters of which are subdivided into numerous paragraphs. All details of the state organization of town planning are set forth here in a strict sequence: from the standard sizes of bricks and their grading according to jobs they were intended for ("Architecture is a science adorned by many doctrines and various arts and should be taken into consideration wherever other arts and crafts are concerned"); from the approval of private projects to freeing the houses of architects from the compulsory billeting of troops, from the demands made upon the sculptor to precise instructions on laying roof tiles.

The authors of *The Functions* advanced the idea of the *State* as the town planner and devoted particular attention to state control of the training of architects and skilled building workers, to state measures for the extensive introduction of progressive constructions and the production of building materials.

These ideas could not be *enlisted* to promote municipal construction as long as the private interests of the upper classes opposed the interests of the people and the anarchic competition of the rich prevented a unified national plan. *The Functions of Architecture*, therefore, lay in the archives unpublished and forgotten for two centuries. The document, however, could not be ignored by Soviet architects engaged on grand construction projects as a united collective of highly skilled specialists guided by the Socialist state. It was natural that they should regard the builders of the constructive epoch of Peter I as their predecessors and should therefore strive to make the fruits of their labour public.

The second part of the first symposium of the *Archives* deals with the lives and works of famous Russian builders and includes two memorandums of the great Russian architect Vassili Bazhenov, with the laconic replies he received from Catherine II.

Of particular interest are V. Bazhenov's draughts of Tsaritsyno, a palace near Moscow, the construction of which was discontinued by orders of Catherine II. The projects which are published here for the first time, with comments by M. Ilyin, present Tsaritsyno not as a royal country seat centered about a sumptuous palace, but as a group of small pavilions surrounded by decorous parkland structures, and may explain the irritation of Catherine II who was annoyed, moreover, by the similarity of the pavilions destined for herself with those for her unfavoured son Paul.

An exhaustive article by G. Grimm which deals with three sets of designs by K. Rossi for the project of complementary structures to surround the Alexandrine Theatre in Petersburg, is a valuable contribution to the literature on this great Russian builder.

The artist I. Rerberg was responsible for the make-up of the symposium.

BALLET *ROMEO AND JULIET* AT THE BOLSHOI THEATRE

A new production of *Hamlet* was given in Leningrad, in the year 1938 with a musical suite especially composed by Sergei Prokofiev. I still remember the impression his music made on me at the time, and the vivid characterization of Shakespeare's men and women. The solemn, somewhat mysterious theme of the Ghost; melodies in Ophelia's songs, in which tender lyricism alternates with frenzied gaiety and boundless grief; the jolly song of the gravedigger—all is integrally bound up with Shakespeare's images. This was not merely the arbitrary fantasy on Shakespearean themes by a brilliant composer, but a deep understanding of the soul of the drama, its true musical interpretation. Shakespeare lovers and connoisseurs of music may well deplore the loss of the manuscript of this fine Suite during the bombardment of Leningrad.

On one occasion when extracts from Prokofiev's *Anthony and Cleopatra* suite were being played at a concert in Moscow, someone in the audience was heard to remark: "What a great dramatist Shakespeare is!" What better tribute could be given to Prokofiev's ability to convey drama in the idiom of music? It was during an interval in *Hamlet* that I first learned that Prokofiev was composing the music for the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*.

Romeo and Juliet. *Scene from act II. Juliet—G. Ulanova, Romeo - M. Gabovich*

Shakespeare—and the ballet! These two words would appear incompatible. The drama of Shakespeare is based on the spoken word, and elimination of the word, would, it might be thought, entail irretrievable loss. Naturally the story might be borrowed from Shakespeare, and interspersed with any amount and variety of dances. In that case, however, the performance would consist, as such performances used to in the past, of separate dance numbers; the story would be nothing but a framework, linking up the scenes externally. Another way would be to convey the dramatic essence of the play through pantomime, with the dancing as an accompaniment. But it would be pantomime and not ballet. L. Lavrovsky, maitre de ballet of the Kirov Theatre of Opera and Ballet in Leningrad, thought long over all these problems. Lavrovsky has always upheld with all the force of conviction, the view that the Russian classical ballet contains potentialities of infinitely wider scope than at first sight appears to be the case. According to Lavrovsky the ballet must shake off its "museum" elements, and become a true, emotional art, conveying truthful, vital feelings, while still preserving its classical form. In a word Lavrovsky dreamed of a synthesis of the drama and the classical ballet, intending by the word "drama" no mere plot of a romantic poem, but the drama in its true sense—the play. It is easy to understand that his thoughts here turned to Shakespeare.

Lavrovsky's first choice rested on one of Shakespeare's most fantastic and conventionalized plays—*The Tempest*. Learning, however, that Prokofiev was working on the music for *Romeo and Juliet*, Lavrovsky temporarily laid aside the thought of *The Tempest*, and, together with the composer, began work on a libretto for a ballet based upon the Shakespearean tragedy.

The first performance of the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, with music by Sergei Prokofiev, was produced by Lavrovsky on January 12, 1940, in the Kirov Theatre of Opera and Ballet, Leningrad. The performance was a great success. I remember the enthusiasm with which that austere and exacting judge of the theatre, the late Nikolai Khmelev of the Moscow Art Theatre, spoke of Galina Ulanova, the ballerina who took the part of Juliet. He said that Ulanova was not only one of our best ballerinas, but also one of our best dramatic actresses.

When Lavrovsky left Leningrad for the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow he decided to revive *Romeo and Juliet* in a new version. This version was first shown to Moscow audiences at the end of December, 1946.

The curtain rises upon a triptych: in the centre is Friar Lorenzo, in the snow-white cassock of his order, the spotlights full upon

him. Before him, slightly lower, stand, on either side, Romeo, all in black, and Juliet, clad in a modest tunic. The light fades, the triptych disappears from view, and a second curtain is raised. The audience sees the busy square of an ancient Italian city.

Pyotr Williams who did the decor, favoured a late-Renaissance setting. I remember a dramatic performance of *Romeo and Juliet* in which the scene was laid in the early 14th century, the Italy of Giotto, inasmuch as, according to Luigi da Porto, Romeo and Juliet lived in those times. The setting was beautiful in itself, but the paucity of its forms was in conflict with the broad, sweeping emotions of Shakespeare's characters. Williams' late Renaissance settings, with touches from the style of a much later epoch (e. g., architectural detail reminiscent of Piranesi), is in greater harmony with the general spirit of the Shakespeare tragedy. True, his Verona is more ornate and sumptuous than the modest city of those times, and this colourful floridity is bound to evoke objections. Shakespeare's plays require a sparser setting, for superfluous lavishness of decoration tends to distract the audience from the human element on the stage. It is not scenery, but the merest hint at scenery which is required. The scene itself should be "left unseen, save to the eye of mind." [1]

But to return to the city square! It is lit up by the rosy light of early dawn. Deep in thought, Romeo paces up and down the empty square. Gradually it fills with people; the light grows stronger, the town awakes. Fruit vendors hurry by, revellers straggle back from their nocturnal carousals; tavern wenches lazily stretching, are setting out the tables, the priest wends his way to matins. Soon the square teems with life. The dancing begins, and it is not simply a dance number, as in the old ballet; it is dancing that reflects the rhythm of the awakening town, and is an integral part of the action.

I saw this production six times running. And every time I was struck by the individuality achieved by every person in this seething throng. This is no corps de ballet in the old sense of the word, based upon the principle of a background of almost identical figures, creating a charming "ornament", like garlands of artificial flowers, against which the prime ballerina and her partner stand in high relief. Here, each has his particular role, and all together create a living crowd, a living, and as it were, "mass" dance. Between the servants of Montague and Capulet a quarrel springs up, and, as it does in Shakespeare's tragedy, the storm of furious hostility gradually develops. Swords flash, the wounded fall, the tocsin is sounded, crowds of citizens armed with clubs, partisans of the two sides come running up. Suddenly the orchestra strikes up a menacing, peremptory theme. Escalus, surrounded by cuirassiers appears. Silence falls on the square. By order of Escalus one of his retainers affixes to the pedestal of a statue an order inscribed on a scroll, prohibiting the baring of weapons in the streets of the city. The crowd disperses. A few remain in front of the statue, discussing the Duke's order. Just then a pair of sportive, black-haired street urchins clamber up on to the statue, devoured with curiosity about all that is going on. These two picturesque little figures appear several times in later scenes, reacting to events in their own way; this is a small but extremely successful vivid detail in the great picture unrolled in the course of the performance.

The square is deserted. Last of all, slowly and reluctantly, Tybalt and his friends withdraw. He is still threatening the supporters of the Montagues, anticipating with pleasurable emotion future skirmishes and bloodshed. And the spectators understand that this is only a beginning. . . .

The role of Tybalt is excellently filled by Alexei Ermolayev. During the last few years it has been my lot to see a number of performances of *Romeo and Juliet* in our dramatic theatres, but nowhere have I seen such an expressive Tybalt. This is no mere bully, no arrogant blusterer, insisting on his feudal "honour". It is a character of much greater significance. In his flame-coloured costume (for he is "fiery Tibalt"), pale of face, and russet-haired, Tybalt as played by Ermolayev is a veritable disseminator of evil: he seeks out duels, for he is in love with murder. Ermolayev succeeds in adding Tybalt to the gallery of the "great" Shakespearean malefactors, of which the first is the portrait of King Richard III.

The curtain rises again. This time upon the bedchamber of Juliet. She is teasing her nurse, dancing round the old woman. She is still just a little girl. The grace of Galina Ulanova in this scene is extraordinary. It is that very same noble, pure *grace* so admired by Pushkin in *Romeo and Juliet*. Lady Capulet enters, and informs her daughter that Paris has asked for her hand in marriage. Juliet does not want to be married, and assures her mother that she is still too young. Lady Capulet then leads her to the mirror and shows her that she is already quite grown up. Juliet's naive confusion in this moment is extremely touching.

It seems to me that Ulanova is able to interpret the role of Juliet so successfully, because she unfolds it gradually: the naive child grows up during the action into the heroine, and the very style of her dancing changes: the light, subdued dance, reminiscent of a cantilena, is later succeeded by a dance of tragic pathos. And in the original Shakespeare, do not the very intonations of Juliet's speech change? The tender melody of "I'll look to like, if looking liking move," becomes the heroic "Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds. . . ."

In the next scene we are shown the pompous procession of the guests visiting the house of Capulet, wherein an "old accustomed feast" is being held. Lavrovsky has filled the intervals between scenes with intermezzos on the proscenium (e. g., the servants carrying viands to the table, teasing one another, and so on). These intermezzos give the uninterrupted action so essential to the presentation of Shakespeare.

Romeo, Mercutio and Benvolio set out for the feast. Romeo stops for a moment to consider as if smitten by some sort of foreboding.

[1] *Rape of Lucrece*, 1426.

But suddenly he cries, with a gesture of the hand: "On, lusty gentlemen!" The action on the stage reminds us very strongly of the words of the Shakespearean text.

There is something traditional about the handling of the first half of the ballroom scene. The stiff, conventionalized dance, the precursor of the *pavanne*, is used by the producer as a foil to Juliet's dance, which he envisages as a "light puff of the zephyr," dispelling the stereotyped atmosphere of the ball.

Mercutio's dance is extremely expressive, and is brilliantly executed by S. Koren. Here are combined true pantomimic action and choreographical skill. The Mercutio of Koren is a slender youth in whose mocking countenance is a touch of the satyr—in his hand he carries the mask of a satyr. When the actor now and then dons this mask we are reminded of the words of Mercutio himself, in the play: "A visor for a visor." The gay dance of Mercutio, which amuses the guests at the ball—even the austere and venerable Capulet laughs heartily—consists of a rapid cascade of leaps and has grotesque and at the same time elegant contours. It is as if Mercutio were scattering witticisms.

The ballroom scene is full of interesting episodes. Tybalt pours himself out a goblet of wine, but to whom will he drink? He thinks a moment, and suddenly an idea comes to him, he gives a delighted chuckle. He draws his sword, empties the goblet to it, kisses the hilt and the blade. . . But the glances of the audience return again and again to Juliet, who is carefree and gay in this scene. She does not know what is going to happen in a minute. Ulanova possesses that "ignorance of the plot," which is the very soul of the actor's art.

The decisive moment arrives. Romeo approaches Juliet with his mask on. The mask slips from his face (this whole scene is played in pantomime, not danced) and the two—Romeo and Juliet—gaze long at one another in amazement. The audience follows this scene with bated breath.

The difficult role of Romeo is played with irreproachable nobility by two actors in turn—Mikhail Gabovich and his understudy Yuri Gofman. Romeo is one of the hardest roles known to the actor. There are the artificial, as it were rhetorical infatuation of Romeo for Rosaline, and philosophical thoughts interwoven with almost childish naivety:

"Alas! That love whose view is muffled still,
Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will.
Where shall we dine? O me! What fray was
here?"

and the joyous puns exchanged between Romeo and Mercutio, and the great, passionate feeling for Juliet, enduring unto death. In the beginning of the tragedy Romeo is a youth, but by the end of it he is calling his rival Paris a "youth", and himself a "man": "Good gentle youth, tempt not a desperate man!" He has been through so much in this short time that he has grown and matured. . . Is it possible to convey on the stage this role in all its complexity? Lensky, one of the greatest actors and producers in the history of the Russian theatre said: "The actor of this role is required to possess both youth and great experience of life—two incompatible conceptions."

The first act (the ballet is in three acts) ends with the scene in Capulet's orchard. In the moonlit orchard Romeo and Juliet, already in love, and mutually conscious of it, dance for the first time together.

The second act opens with a noisy and vivid scene in the square. It is carnival time. The statue of the Madonna is carried around, followed by a jubilant throng. The dancing begins. The Jester (Georgi Farmanyants) displays extraordinary virtuosity. Leaping from the ground, he seems to fly and spin in the air. This is the only occasion in the whole performance when separate dance numbers, with no direct relation to the action are introduced.

Romeo, Benvolio and the light-hearted Mercutio join the crowd. The nurse gives Romeo a message from Juliet. . . .

Here the musical theme changes to a harmonious austere note. Connoisseurs of music may appraise the artistic subtleties of Prokofiev's work. Personally I was struck chiefly by its dramatic and graphic qualities. You could close your eyes and still follow the action and as it were visualize the scenes as they succeed one another. At one particular moment you would know without looking at the stage, that Friar Lorenzo's cell had appeared beneath the vaulted monastery ceiling. The clarity and purity of the image of Lorenzo given by Bulgakov is something to be remembered. He conveys in a most touching manner the theme of the wise, calm, enlightened old man, extending a helping hand to youthful, blossoming life.

The problem of conveying in a ballet Lorenzo's philosophical monologue on the duality of natural phenomena, each of which contains within itself both life and death, has been cleverly solved. Lorenzo holds in his hand a skull and a flower, contemplating them in alternate joy and grief. The symbol is repeated when the Friar on entering his cell, strews the floor with flowers, thus laying a carpet for the feet of Juliet; suddenly Romeo catches sight of the skull, takes it up and falls pensive. At that moment Romeo reminds us of Hamlet. . . .

Two separate scenes from the play (Act II, scenes 3 and 5.) are here merged. Romeo leads Juliet to the altar. They approach very slowly, step by step. Juliet on the points of her toes, thus imparting to the moment expressive strictness of contour. It seems to me that in this scene Lavrovsky has achieved the complete fulfillment of his dream, the synthesis of drama and the classical ballet.

The curtain falls. "Fiery Tibalt" rushes up and down the proscenium surrounded by courtesans. Short intermezzo. An old fruit peddler accidentally treads on the toe of the courtesan. Tybalt decides to punish him by making him kneel and beg her pardon. All this passes at an extremely rapid tempo. The curtain once more rises on the square filled with a many-hued crowd. Tybalt catching sight of Romeo among the crowd, is frozen to the spot, like a hound sensing its prey. A stormy, ever-expanding theme is struck up by the orchestra. The duel scene begins, in which Mercutio and Tybalt are both to fall.

Sergei Koren as Mercutio. *By A. Goncharov*

Romeo and Juliet.
Scene from act III

The duel scene is undoubtedly one of the best in the whole performance. Veritable passion has been instilled in it by composer, producer and actors. The picture of figures hurrying to and fro, covering the vast area of the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre with the movements of their dance in an ever-accelerating rhythm, could only have been created by a master of choreography. The development of the rhythm finds reflection in the changing methods of fencing: at first they fight with swords, then a dagger appears in the left hand of each, and, finally, each is armed with two swords. This scene is played throughout with the utmost intensity by Ermolayev in the role of Tybalt: flying in the air, his russet hair, thrown back, streaming in the breeze, he is the very embodiment of rage and malice. The crowd follows the fight with bated breath. The moment when Romeo bends over the dead Tybalt and suddenly catches sight of Juliet at her window, is full of dramatic expression.

The most trifling details have been worked out by the producer with great subtlety. At the moment of Mercutio's death, for example, when mortally wounded, he still tries to keep up his spirits, feeling with his fingers the blade of his sword, as if playing on a musical instrument, the two street urchins climb to a vantage point and burst into tears which they wipe away with their fists—they are sorry for the gay Mercutio.

In addition to skillfully worked-out details many purely episodic roles are excellently played. Worthy of mention are the two friends of Tybalt, who follow him about everywhere. These are two complacent gentlemen, no longer young, who have lived out their days in peaceful selfish prosperity when, meeting with Tybalt, they lost their heads and for the first time experience sincere admiration. Tybalt is their hero, their idol. Tribute must be paid to the mimic skill of the performers who have managed without words to convey to the audience their biographies, to create from sparse, episodic material, the images of living human beings. The parts of these two friends of Tybalt are played by L. Matzkevich and S. Chudinov.

Obviously not all the images created by Shakespeare can be gotten into the framework of a ballet-libretto. While the role of old Capulet, austere, harsh and imperious, is vividly and forcibly played by A. Radunsky, there is not enough material in the libretto for a comprehensive revelation of the image of Lady Capulet. The role of the Nurse has suffered most by excessive scissoring. I. Olenina plays the part extremely well, but, owing to its having been pared down in Lavrovsky's book, she is only enabled to convey one aspect—that of the tender maternal feelings for Juliet. The comic, "Falstaffian" aspect (the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* has been called a "Falstaff in petticoats") is but feebly shown. And insufficient attention has been given to the servant Peter, played (it may be remembered) in Shakespeare's time by William Kemp, the premier comic actor of the troupe, who afterwards, as Professor Dover Wilson has recently discovered, played the part of Falstaff. Altogether the "Falstaffian", or if preferred, the "Flemish" element is insufficiently brought out in this production.

The body of Tybalt is laid on a litter, with Lady Capulet seated at the foot. They are slowly borne off-stage, Lady Capulet raising her hands to heaven as if calling for vengeance. The numerous kinsfolk and partisans of the Capulets, baring their swords, vow that blood shall be wiped out with blood. This effective procession finishes up the tempestuous duel scene and brings the second act to an end.

Now begins the most important part of the performance. The first scene of the third and final act takes place in the bedchamber of Juliet. This is her last tryst with Romeo. As I have already remarked, Lavrovsky is an opponent of the old-fashioned "traditional" division of ballet into drama line and dance, and is an advocate of the fusion of these two principles. Here we have another example of such fusion: the love of Romeo and Juliet for each other, their profound grief at parting, the despair tearing at their hearts, all find their outlet in dance, at once expressive in its dramatic quality and a masterpiece of choreography, Romeo departs. Juliet, throwing a cloak over her shoulders, runs to the window to see the last of his disappearing

figure. The motionless figure of Juliet standing at the window expresses dumb, inarticulate grief. It is only the greatest actors who can convey overwhelming emotion by silence and immobility. Much has been written of Ulanova's uncommon dramatic ability. I regard her as one of the greatest tragic actresses of our day.

The parents of Juliet enter with Paris. Lady Capulet informs Juliet that the day for her marriage to Paris has been appointed. The father sternly and imperatively orders her to obey, threatening to turn her out of the house if she does not.

Juliet is once again alone. She is in despair. To whom is she to look for salvation? Suddenly she thinks of Friar Lorenzo. Hastily donning her cloak, she runs to him. The moment in which Juliet rushes forward, hastening to him who is, perhaps, the only one who will extend her a helping hand resounds (and the word "resounds" applies here, for her movements are perfectly merged with the music) like an explosion of tragic pathos.

Having received from Friar Lorenzo an opiate, Juliet returns with it to her chamber. After a hard internal struggle, overcoming her fear, she swallows the drug, and falls unconscious upon her bed. The curtains of the bed fall, concealing the sleeping Juliet from the spectators. The golden rays of a dawn fill the bedchamber. The sound of stringed instruments is heard off stage. The music draws nearer. Juliet's friends—youths and maidens—enter. Their dance to the tender tranquil music is enchanting. The young ballerina L. Cherkassova dances beautifully in the role of Juliet's best friend. Suddenly the Nurse raises the bed curtains and the dance comes to an immediate standstill. All gaze with horror at Juliet, whom they believe to be dead.

The action is transferred to Mantua. The sombre outline of the town—a mass of vaguely descried buildings seems to reflect the chaotic emotions prevailing in the soul of Romeo. The musical theme is full of deep pathos and Romeo's dance follows the theme. The action then passes to the cemetery and the last scene begins: the death of Romeo and Juliet and the reconciliation of the Montagues and Capulets. The comic scene between Peter and the musicians is omitted.

I have already remarked that the "Falstaffian" element is poorly represented in the general composition of the production. This omission causes an immoderate intensification of the tragic and leads to excessive gloom in the finale.

The story of the two Veronese lovers touches Soviet audiences closely first and foremost because it is the glorification of permanent emotions. Unquestionably much has been done by the Soviet theatre for the interpretation of this Shakespeare tragedy. In the past *Romeo and Juliet* has been produced primarily as a drama of love. The antagonism between the Montagues and the Capulets was shown as battle scenes incidental to the drama. The death of the lovers was attributed to blind fate. The Soviet theatre, as also Soviet Shakespeare criticism, has set its face resolutely against the conception of the dominant role of blind fate—a conception more in keeping with Greek tragedy than with Shakespeare. It was the hostility between the Montagues and the Capulets, in other words, the circumstances of real life, which decided the sad fate of the lovers. Romeo and Juliet took up the struggle against fate and, though they both die, maintain a moral victory over it. The Montagues and the Capulets extend their hands to each other. Man is capable of conquering destiny, of changing the course of life—such is the ultimate philosophical summary of this tragedy.

The theme of enmity has thus been introduced into the very texture of the Soviet performance, which thus ceases to be a paraphrase of a love story. Obedient to the law of contrast, the love theme stands out all the more vividly. The Soviet theatre does not aspire to the isolated representation of individual characters but to their revelation through their relationship with each other. *Romeo and Juliet* is shown to audiences as a huge canvas on which a multiplicity of human figures is drawn.

The initiator of this new theatrical interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet* was Alexei Popov who produced the tragedy at the Moscow Theatre of the Revolution in 1936. Since then there have been numerous interesting productions of the play, in the spirit of the lines laid down. There were, for example, the production of A. A. Tamaishvili in the Georgian Theatre of the Young Spectator in Tbilisi in 1944 (in the Georgian language); and the vivid production of L. Litvinov in the Yanko Kupala Theatre, Minsk, in the year 1945 (in the Belorussian language). The ballet performance at the Bolshoi Theatre represents a new and significant milestone in this series of dramatic performances.

The performance described in this article cannot fail to play an important part in the creative life of the Soviet ballet. Pursuing the line of a synthesis of the drama and the classical ballet, it has proved that the Soviet ballet is capable, with no detriment to its original character, and without degenerating into mere pantomime, of presenting any dramatic work, however complex and profound the theme. This performance has told us eloquently how rich are the potentialities of an art once regarded, as an old-time theatrical critic put it, as the mere "beautiful fluttering of butterflies."

MIKHAIL MOROZOV

NEWS AND VIEWS

LITERATURE

SOVIET LITERATURE IN 1946

The development of Soviet literature during 1946 was the subject of a special session held by the Gorky Institute of World Literature and attended by writers, critics, historians, literary and art scholars.

In his introductory remarks Professor Valeri Kirpotin, vice-director of the institute, said that the session had to summarize the achievements of literature during the war years and outline its new, peacetime trend of development.

The report on Soviet prose was delivered by the critic Lev Subotsky who observed that literature, like any sphere of Soviet art, is closely linked with social life and hence the country's return to peaceful endeavour also confronted writers with the necessity of "reconversion to peace."

"The problem of the ties of art with the political life of the country is one of ideological content, of the ideas the artist carries to his people in his capacity of life's teacher and engineer of man's soul," said Subotsky. He analyzed some of the more outstanding literary works of the past year from this standpoint.

Return to peaceful life has brought forth moral themes, subjects of every-day life and the family. Fiction dealing with post-war reconstruction and the new five-year plan has been published. War experiences have been presented in a new light. Also several new historical novels have appeared—the last volume of the trilogy about Ivan Grozny by Kostylev, *The Mikhailov Castle* by Olga Forsh; books dealing with the events preceding the Socialist revolution and the first years of the Soviet state have been written by Zamoisky and Luknitsky.

Subotsky thoroughly analyzed several books written on war topics such as Lifshitz's *Petrograd Side*, Nekrasov's *Stalingrad* and Berezko's *A Night in the Life of a Commander*.

The critic spoke of the opportunities for the development of the individual offered by the Soviet system, which is the main trend in life which the writer must perceive and portray. This also offers the solution of the problem of the hero of our times.

When considering the characters portrayed in literature we find that many of the heroes are good, honest, useful Soviet people. At the same time, however, they are people of varying intellectual development. They all have to be portrayed so that Soviet life, as depicted by the writer, should not lose its realistic traits. The author, however, must stress the best, progressive traits in the spiritual make-up of the Soviet people in order to reveal the main line of development of the new man in the new society.

"We are against embellishing life," Subotsky said, "but we stand for revealing its main tendencies to the full."

A paper on Soviet poetry was read by the critic Victor Pertsov. He said there are three aspects to the problem of "reconversion to peace," namely: 1) The hero in post-war poetry or the problem of the creation of epic works; 2) The problem of the change of lyric poetry from war to peace; 3) the theme of creative endeavour. From this standpoint Pertsov examined last year's major works, dwelling on the efforts of young poets who have written some fine verses.

The problem of the writer and his duty to the people was discussed by the critic Alexander Leites.

The motto "Art for Art's Sake," he pointed out, is in reality a manifestation of scorn for mankind, of non-concern with its fate. It is not a matter of chance that a number of major proponents of this decadent world outlook renounce in their esthetic credos and writings the best literary traditions of their people and end up by betraying their people in critical moments of history (Knut Hamsun, André Gide).

A high sense of social duty, of the responsibility of the artist to the people is one of the indispensable conditions for the development of great art which can influence the masses.

Alexander Fadeyev, Secretary-General of the Union of Soviet Writers, spoke about the combination of realism and romanticism in major literary works. A portrayal of all of life's phenomena, of all the traits of the human character can be genuine only if the writer depicts the inner beauty of man, his noble traits; Socialist realism, therefore, must need contain elements of the romantic. Soviet literature combines lofty morals with similarly lofty ideals and it is precisely this that enables the writer to portray the modern man in all his gigantic stature.

TIKHONOV'S YUGOSLAV POEMS

"His pen does not write but seems to engrave hard metal." This apt description of Nikolai Tikhonov's cycle of verses about Yugoslavia was given by the poetess Vera Inber, following their reading at the poetic section of the Moscow Writers' Club. A large audience listened attentively to the 1,000 lines of verse which reflect the poet's keen sense of observation and sentiments of friendship for the heroic Yugoslav people.

The poet Pavel Antokolsky emphasized the keen feeling for history, of its continuity and mighty forward movement in verses that reveal the fraternal ties of the Russian and Yugoslav peoples.

"In this book romanticism and realism have merged into a single whole," noted Ashot Grashi, Armenian poet, who also spoke about the great influence of Tikhonov on modern Armenian poetry.

The verses about Yugoslavia are only part of a major plan which embraces cycles about

other Slavonic countries—Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Poland—which Tikhonov has visited in recent years.

SOVIET WRITERS HONOUR MEMORY OF JEAN-RICHARD BLOCH

The Soviet literary world joined in paying tribute to the memory of Jean-Richard Bloch, noted French writer and anti-fascist. News of his untimely death was carried by the Soviet press: *Literaturnaya Gazeta* published an obituary signed by the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers:

"For many years Bloch was a friend of our country, our social system, our culture," Soviet writers said. The article recalls that the French writer was one of the first to go to Spain when the fight of the Spanish people against Hitler's hireling Franco began.

The anti-fascist fighter had to leave his native land and spent the war years in the U.S.S.R. Soviet men of letters recall his splendid articles which so relentlessly exposed the Lavals and Petains. Thousands of Frenchmen in the underground movement and in ranks of the guerrillas heard his voice over the radio. Speaking from Moscow, the writer told them about the staunchness and heroism of the Soviet people and inspired his countrymen to fight the invaders.

On returning to France Bloch carried on both as writer and anti-fascist. "French postwar democracy owes a great deal to the courageous and sincere voice of Jean-Richard Bloch," the obituary declares.

"We, his Soviet readers and friends, will remember the charming personality of Jean-Richard Bloch, his selfless industry and optimism which never, even in the hardest days, deserted the writer and fighter."

A message of condolence to the family of the deceased writer and his friends and colleagues was sent jointly by the Foreign Commission of the Union of Soviet Writers and the editorial boards of *Soviet Literature* and *Literaturnaya Gazeta*.

THEATRE

THE RUSSIAN QUESTION ON THE STAGE

Simonov's *The Russian Question*[1] has attracted unusual attention and this play is to be staged by several hundred playhouses throughout the country. In Moscow five of the leading theatres (the Moscow Art, Maly, Vakhtangov, Mossoviet and Lenin Komsomol) are producing it and in Leningrad the Pushkin Drama, the Bolshoi Drama and Comedy theatres. The simultaneous production of a play by a number of the leading Leningrad and Moscow theatres is very unusual and shows how great is the interest displayed in this work.

The first to stage it were the Leningrad Drama and the Lenin Komsomol theatres. These productions differ considerably as regards treatment and presentation. In Leningrad the young regisseur Zakhar Agranenko attempted to give a picture of American life, while in Moscow producer Serafima Birman concentrated her efforts on revealing the psychology of the characters.

Simonov's is an impartial but by no means dispassionate play. The hero, Harry Smith, is not a Communist, revolutionary or "left winger". He is an average American, who strives for a quiet, secure life, but does not want to buy his well-being at the price of his integrity. Smith is least of all inclined to criticize America which provides him with a comfortable living. He prizes his own freedom but his sense of fair play is strong enough to demand respect for the freedom of others.

In this light Smith is portrayed by both Freindlikh in Leningrad and Pelovin in Moscow. Their Smith is neither a hero, a fighter nor a champion of the people's interests, but an ordinary man with an innate sense of honesty and inner concentration and strength of character. The latter two traits, among the most attractive in the mental make-up of an American, are well brought out by Simonov. They are revealed, in turn, by the actors who draw their parts in soft lines without any overaccentuation.

The evolution Smith undergoes is not the result of the discovery of something new, something he did not know before. The ideas he imbibed from childhood about the freedom of the press and of the individual in America were mere abstract conceptions to him. He did not connect them or see their contradiction with the actual state of affairs in the press and the servile position of his fellow newspapermen, since he regarded each case as an exception to the rule, and not as a reflection on American democracy.

When Macpherson received a truthful account about the U.S.S.R. instead of a slanderous anti-Soviet book, he, without batting an eyelash, suggested that Smith "corrects his mistake." Smith, however, replied: "What I wrote is not a mistake. This is what I think now." And then Macpherson cynically explains his views on the matter: "Evidently. But I am not interested in what my correspondents think. Let them think what they like. I'm interested in what they write. In a word, I don't want to interfere in your private business or even know what you think."

Here is a substantial amendment to Smith's ideas about the freedom of the press. He is "free" to think as he pleases but he must write what the boss wants or he will be kicked out to have his place taken by someone more amenable. This dramatic clash between democratic illusions and American reality provides the tensest moments in the play.

In addition to Smith both theatres concentrate on the portrayal of Macpherson, owner of a chain of big newspapers, and one of the moving spirits in the anti-Soviet campaign. The part of Macpherson is taken in Leningrad by Politseimako and in Moscow by Bersenev. The first portrays a man out for money and power, a big-game politician who knows no scruples and disdains no means to attain his end. Bersenev portrays Macpherson as a businessman of smaller calibre in whom petty vanity is an overpowering trait. Both Politseimako and Bersenev show that Macpherson is not only in sympathy with fascism ideologically but is very close to it in actual prac-

[1] See *Soviet Literature*, No. 2, 1947.

tice. And Smith is right when he says that only one-quarter of Macpherson is an enemy of the Soviet Union, while three-quarters of him are an enemy of the American people and American democracy.

The Leningrad and Moscow theatres invested much energy in revealing the character of people mangled by life, people who have been broken by the Macphersons and retained neither their principles, honesty nor integrity.

One of the central figures in this gallery is Jessie, a woman whose soul is hardened and devastated by a lonely life devoid of ideals and devoted entirely to the struggle for existence. A homeless "old sinner", as she calls herself, Jessie dreams of a family, children and an honest life. We soon learn, however, that beneath the thin veneer of sentiment there is cold reasoning, the desire to attain material security at any cost. When her calculations fail and Smith proves unable to provide her with an easy life she deserts him at the crucial moment. Yet the collapse of her hopes, the tragedy of her unfulfilled dreams evokes a feeling of pity in the Soviet spectator and makes him think not so much of her greed as of her weakness, her crippled soul. The part of Jessie is played by Z. Karpova in Leningrad and V. Serova in Moscow. Both convey the complexity of the character they impersonate. Actor A. Zhukov, of the Leningrad cast, is superb in the part of the drunkard Murphy.

CHILDREN'S THEATRE STAGES MARSHAK'S PLAY

The Central Children's Theatre has produced Samuil Marshak's new play *Pussy's House*. Written on the basis of a popular children's song, it tells the story of a cat which mingles in high society but who after her home burns down finds no shelter among her rich friends and has to turn for aid to some poor kittens who share their home with her.

The simple plot with the equally simple moral that a feeling of compassion is alien to the high and mighty is well brought out in Marshak's play which is of interest both to youngsters and adults. Children find in it an entertaining story whose moral they easily grasp. For adults Marshak's play offers many unexpected associations, direct satirical thrusts and elements of parody. For example, the fire scene gives the playwright a splendid opportunity to portray in satirical vein the indifference of the philistine to the troubles of his fellow-men.

The decor by Shaporin is 19th-century Russia which gives the production a touch of reality.

The part of the cat is played by Klavdia Koreneva, one of the stars of the Children's Theatre.

PUPPET THEATRE PRESENTS *OLD URALS TALES*

Two picturesque and quaint stories from Pavel Bazhov's collections of Urals tales have been adapted by the Moscow Puppet Theatre for its juvenile audiences. The first, *Bluestone Well*, tells of the old sorceress Sinyushka (Bluestone) who lives at the bottom of a well enveloped in a strange blue mist. She jealously guards the earth's treasures and woe to anyone who comes close to her abode. If he happens to be a greedy and cowardly man the sorceress' hands will reach out for him. "Their outline is vague, they look like a blue mist and there seems to be no strength in her hands . . . but they throw fear into the heart of man. . ." Sinyushka, however, is won over by the courage and honesty of the young lad Ilya. She presents him with a sieve full of ripe berries which turn into precious gems.

The other tale, entitled *Golden Hair* is based on a Bashkir legend. Golden Hair is the name of a beautiful girl who is loved by Ailyp, the brave hunter. The girl's father, who is the owner of subterranean gold treasures, tries to interfere with the lovers' happiness. He fastens the girl to a rock with a golden chain which no man is strong enough to lift. But Ailyp overcomes all obstacles. He is helped by the girl's old nurse who turns into a fox and points the way to the escaping lover.

Bazhov's tales collected in the books *The Malachite Casket* and *Key Stone* have won great popularity. They served as the theme for a ballet and also for the film *Stone Flower*.

Old Urals Tales, *staged by the Moscow Puppet Theatre*

EMINENT COMPOSER CELEBRATES 75th ANNIVERSARY

Sergei Vassilenko is the personification of the living ties between Soviet music and the best traditions of Russian classical music—this is the way one music scholar described the role of this veteran composer, conductor and teacher who was recently honoured on the occasion of his 75th birthday.

Attracted to music from an early age, Vassilenko was a pupil of Taneyev and Ippolitov-Ivanov at the Moscow Conservatory. His graduation composition *Tale of the Town of Kitezh*, won a gold medal. More than half a century has passed since then in the course of which Vassilenko has written many operatic, ballet, symphonic and chamber works.

Bringing music to the people has been one of the steadfast aims of the composer. At the beginning of the present century he was the moving spirit behind a cycle of concerts given by the Moscow Conservatory which featured compositions from the 16th to the end of the 19th centuries. These popular series attracted an audience of workers, students and office employees which differed greatly from the usual concertgoers in those days.

In Soviet times Vassilenko has rendered notable services in the development of music in the republics of Central Asia. He wrote the first Uzbek ballet *Agbelag*. Together with his pupil, the Uzbek composer M. Asrafi, he wrote two operas on Uzbek themes—*The Blizzard* and *The Great Canal*.

During the war years Vassilenko wrote the opera *Suvorov* about the great Russian 18th-century army leader. This opera was produced in Moscow, Sverdlovsk and Tashkent.

HISTORY OF RUSSIAN MUSIC CONCERT SERIES

A series of concerts tracing the history of Russian music in the 18th and early 19th centuries has been arranged by the Central Museum of Music in Moscow. Russian music of the pre-Glinka period is little known to the general concertgoer and the cycle has attracted considerable attention.

The first concert featured the works of Evstigney Fomin, 18th-century Russian composer. Singers of Moscow theatres and the U.S.S.R. State Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Nikolai Anosov presented *Orpheus* and *Coachmen at the Wayside Inn*.

Orpheus, written for two voices, chorus and orchestra, can hardly be called an opera in the modern sense of the term. It is a melodrama with the dramatic text alternating or coinciding with the orchestral music which is at times interrupted by the chorus. Despite its simplicity of structure, *Orpheus* has dramatic tension and emotional force.

The second piece is a comic opera, more in the nature of a vaudeville with many musical numbers. Its plot is weak but the music is interesting because of its close affinity to the Russian folk song.

Other concerts in the series will feature the music of Dmitri Bortnyansky, Alexei Verstovsky and Alexander Alyabyev.

SCIENTIFIC QUEST IS SUBJECT OF NEW FILM

Producers Alexander Zarkhi and Joseph Heifits, known for their films *Baltic Deputy* and *A Member of the Government* always pose major social problems in their work. They do so again in their latest film *In the Name of Life*. This film endeavours to answer some of the burning and vital questions of the day, namely: what is the young man of our times like? How has the war in which he took part changed him? What are his hopes and aspirations now that he is back in civilian life? And, last but not least, what has life in store for him?

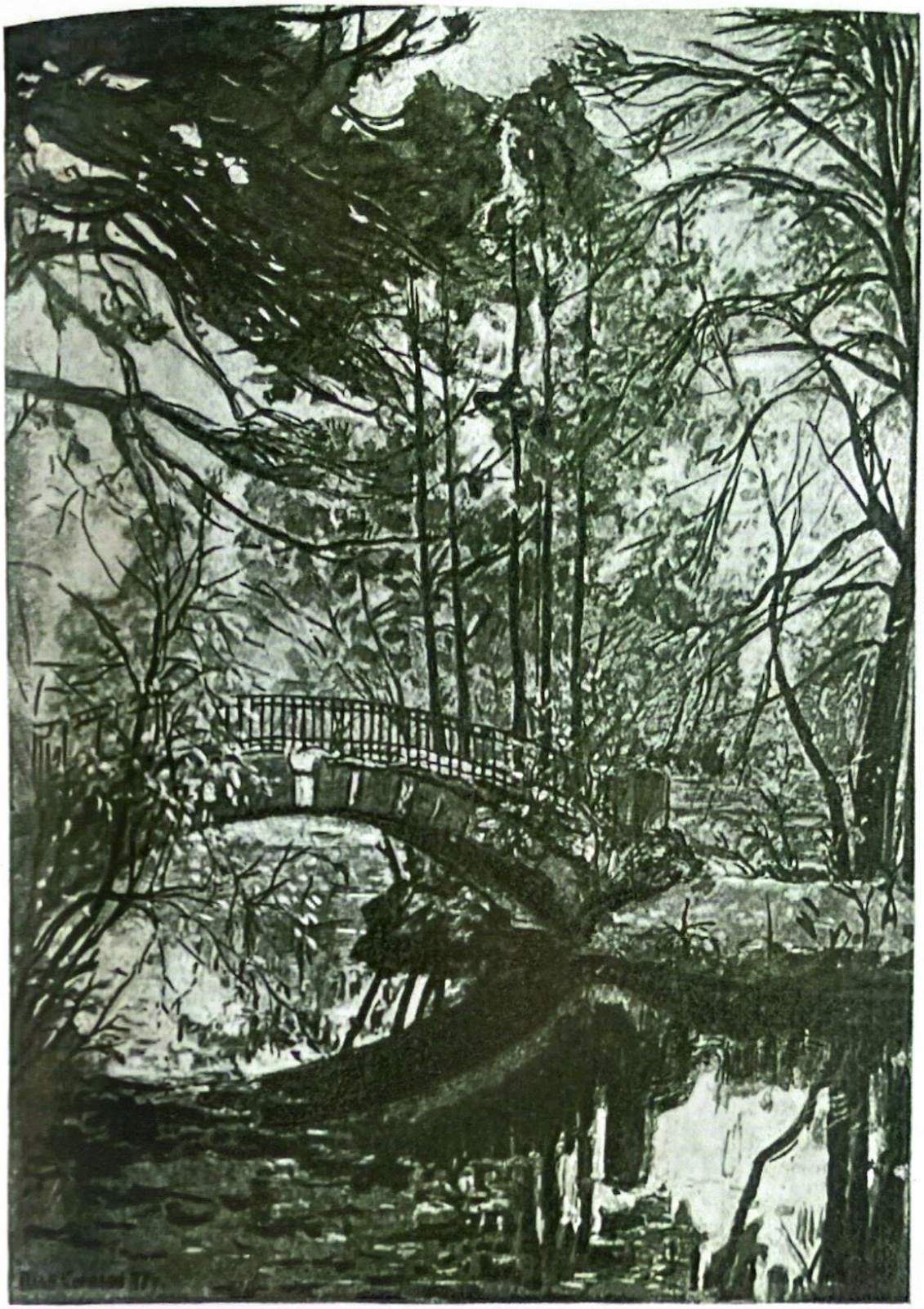
These questions have been raised in J. B. Priestley's *Three Men in New Suits*. The heroes of that book return home without an exact idea of what they are going to do. They are merely aware that they are tired of frontline life, that they have changed during the war. With the skill of an artist Priestley shows that life in Britain does not give his heroes the opportunity to meet their new demands. The book ends with the heroes getting together to think over the problem of how to readjust the conditions of life in their country.

For the heroes of *In the Name of Life*, as for all Soviet youth, the problem of their place in the post-war scheme of things does not arise. There are three of them, three young doctors and they come back from the front with their work cut out for them. Their war experience prompts them to undertake the solution of a major medical problem. It is the question of the regeneration of nerve cells deadened by bruises, shell shock or wounds which frequently cause partial or complete paralysis.

The three young doctors are given every opportunity to carry on their experiments and with all the fervour of youth and of real devotees of science they pursue their investigations.

For many months all their efforts lead to one failure after another, to setbacks capable of discouraging the most persistent researcher. At first one of the trio and then the second leave the job that claims all their energies, but brings them nothing but disappointment in return. But the third doctor, Petrov, carries on alone. With the persistence and stamina of a real trail blazer he forges ahead until he achieves his goal.

The plot of the film has two lines that reveal traits typical to the psychology of the Soviet man. First, the realization that his work is essential to mankind encourages Petrov in his scientific quest. Like his comrades, Petrov has moments of despair and pessimism as a result of repeated failures. But he is spurred on by the knowledge that there are those for whom his work is a question of life itself. Second, Petrov regards persistence in the attainment of a goal and the attitude to work, as the chief thing in life, whatever a man's calling. Without hesitation Petrov insists that the woman he loves, an actress, leave for Moscow where a chance to perfect her art awaits her, though at that moment he personally needs her most.



Autumn landscape. *Linoleum by I. Sokolov*

Still from the film In the Name of Life

The role of Petrov is played by Khokhryakov of the Moscow Transport Theatre, who appears on the screen, for the first time. Lepanova, who takes the part of actress Lena, also stars in her first screen role.

A minor role, that of a laboratory watchman, is brilliantly played by the well-known screen actor Nikolai Cherkasov.

UZBEK FILM BRINGS POPULAR FOLK HERO TO SCREEN

Hoja Nasreddin (Nasir-ud-Din), favourite hero of the peoples of the Orient, has again come to the Soviet screen. This wit and philosopher, champion of the oppressed and irreconcilable enemy of the brutal rulers, greedy merchants and venal judges was first portrayed in the film *Nasreddin in Bokhara*, produced in 1943 by Yakov Protazanov. At that time the cast was composed almost entirely of Russian actors with only the part of the beautiful Gul Jan taken by a young Uzbek actress.

The new film *Nasreddin's Adventures* is produced by the Uzbek director Nabi Ghaniev and its cast is composed exclusively of Uzbek actors. It is entirely a product of the growing Uzbek national cinema.

The mainspring of the plot is one of the many adventures of Nasreddin, the fight for water which in Central Asia is the staff of life. It is the story of how Nasreddin gives back to the people the water which the rich had usurped. Rozak Khamrayev, Uzbek actor, draws an attractive portrait of a man of clear mind and noble heart who wins the affection of the people. The film also tells the story of the love of Said and Zulfa, parts that are rendered with poetic simplicity by Kabuil Khalikov and Yulduz Rizaeva. A good contrast to this loving couple is provided by the swindling money changer and his boisterous wife.

ART

TWO VETERAN ARTISTS MARK JUBILEE

Two veteran Russian artists are celebrating their 75th birthday this year—Ivan Pavlov, renowned engraver, and V. Byalynitsky-Biryulya, master of the landscape.

Pavlov is known as the "Poet of Moscow". His cycles of linoleum cuts mirror the Moscow of old churches, snow-blanketed courtyards and mansions. The old engraver has produced a number of works depicting wartime Moscow. Pavlov has also many works dedicated to the smaller Russian towns.

Still from the film Nasreddin's Adventures

Many books have been written about the life and work of this Russian artist, but the most vivid and interesting is *The Life of a Russian Engraver* written by Pavlov himself.

Byalynitsky-Biryulya's brush is dedicated to the Russian spring, to awakening nature. He is at his best in lyrical landscapes. While continuing the traditions of Isaac Levitan, he became neither an imitator nor blind follower but evolved a style all of his own. He finds his inspiration in early morning mists, twilights, small rivulets when they shed their ice fetters in the spring, the first green shoots and early flowers. He abhors sharp colour contrasts. His pallette is sparing but at the same time filled with rich inner meaning.

Byalynitsky-Biryulya is an indefatigable traveller and his quests have taken him to many corners of the land. He visited collective farms, construction sites, experimental stations. Together with a group of explorers he went to the Far North and brought back with him canvases portraying the Arctic's grim nature.

WORKS OF GRAPHIC ARTISTS EXHIBITED IN SOVIET LITHUANIA

A large graphic art exhibition opened in the State Arts Museum in Vilnius features the works of many noted Soviet artists from Moscow, Leningrad, the Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Armenia.

The war and life in the post-war period form the theme of most of the exhibits. The visitor's attention is arrested by the linoleum engraving *Moscow on the Defensive* by Ivan Pavlov, Stalin Prize winner and one of the oldest Soviet graphic artists. The leaden autumn sky and stern lines of the buildings call to mind the grim days of 1941-1942.

Highly impressive is the Sevastopol album of L. Soifertis. His drawings *A Suspicious Character* or *Me and Grandma Are Working for War* breathe the heroic defence of the Crimean bastion. Lithographs by V. Kudrov, an artist who was a member of a guerrilla detachment, give a true picture of the war.

The engravings by V. Yurkunas, Lithuanian artist, who depicts his countrymen under German rule, is reminiscent of the horrible days of the German invasion.

A series by A. Pakhomov is dedicated to Leningrad. One sees the city on the Neva in the grip of enemy siege, and alongside a lithograph of Leningrad as it celebrates the lifting of the siege. Then come pictures illustrating the revival of the battle-scarred warrior city. The period of reconstruction is portrayed in *A Girl Carpenter* and *Plasterers*.

Great mastery distinguishes the linoleum engravings *Old Riga in Ruins* and *Field Flowers* by the Latvian artist Abelits.

The revival of life in the countryside is the leitmotif in the drawings of A. Laptev who gives a vivid picture of the villages rising from ruins in his *Before Sowing* or *Cattle Returning Home*.

The Lithuanian exhibition is only one of the many being arranged throughout the country by the Committee on Arts which aim to acquaint people in different sections of the country with the work of artists of the present and past generations.

This year thirty-five such mobile exhibitions are being opened in different sections of the U.S.S.R.

Leningrad. *By I. Pavlov*

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